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THE CASE FOR CULTURALLY AFFIRMING SYSTEMS OF
EDUCATION: EXPLORING HOW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
IMPACTS CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND CRITICAL LITERACY
TEACHING PRACTICES

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Education.

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Finally, this project is for the students, teachers and educators who make up our education system. I dream of culturally affirming systems in education, we deserve this in our world for all of our children.

ABSTRACT

Seeley Dzierzak, C. *The Case for Culturally Affirming Systems of Education: Exploring How Professional Development Impacts Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Teaching Practices (2021)*

This case study based on a qualitative paradigm utilized grounded theory to analyze teacher interviews, focus groups and elite interviews focused on culturally relevant and critical literacy practices. This case study focuses on a small group of teachers and facilitators in a large urban school district in Minnesota. This dissertation focused on the impact of culturally relevant and critical literacy professional development on teachers' mindsets and practices.

The theoretical concepts that emerged from this case study are the importance of culturally affirming systems. The data collected from this project support the need for creating culturally affirming classrooms, diverse literature, and the opportunity for student voices to be heard. During and after professional development, teachers must have the opportunity for application, reflection, and time to dialogue with peers.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Critical literacy is not a teaching method but a way of thinking and a way of being that challenges texts and life as we know it. Critical literacy focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action. It encourages readers to be active participants in the reading process: to question, to dispute, and to examine power relations (Freire, 1970).

This project is extremely important to me as a person and as an educator. I believe that knowledge is power and that giving students tools to be critical thinkers will enrich their lives and give them choices. This project has gone through many layers of research and thinking and I'm at the point where I want this to be a research paper, but also an actionable tool that teachers and schools can use as a model in their literacy instruction. We are currently in a global pandemic, fighting COVID-19 and people are being asked to "shelter in place" to avoid a global catastrophe. While students and families are being asked to isolate, there is no shortage of information--there are news reports, twitter feeds, Facebook comments, and many other ways that people are getting information. In addition to our global health pandemic, we are living in a time of racial unrest. There have been multiple police-related violent attacks on the African American community across our nation, and it has ignited our nation in a racial discussion. Communities across the nation and the world are grappling with racial equity issues.

This makes this topic even more relevant and important for teachers, students and our community.

During times like this, it's essential for people to have critical literacy skills to discern between fact and fiction. It's also important for people to find new ways of engaging socially. Literacy can be this bridge, and can help people truly "read the world" in new and innovative ways (Freire & Macedo, 1987). As a school administrator, I'm finding ways to share literacy tools with students and families from their homes using the internet and physical literacy resources. I'm finding that these tools allow students to stay engaged and connected. Students have the power to create their own stamp on the world through literacy, in very broad ways. Students can write, create online videos, poems, songs, raps, text one another, video conference and engage with people in ways that were not a reality in the past few years. While technology has shifted and teachers and students are being asked to engage in "online or distance learning," we are all being asked to stretch our thinking regarding literacy and other forms of instruction. However, despite all of these new technologies, critical literacy is still an important foundation for having social agency. This global pandemic has created the space for being able to focus on this project and to think about how to do research in digital ways. Our current racial unrest has sparked a wave of people who want to see racial justice in our communities and our schools. There must be ways to provide professional development experiences for teachers to engage in this work. My literature review in chapter 2 includes research on culturally relevant teaching practices, critical literacy and professional development strategies. My primary research questions are focused on professional development

which provides knowledge and strategies for teachers on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy. My primary research question is: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? My secondary question is: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders?

As an educator and literacy leader, I want to find ways to embed culturally relevant practices and critical literacy within literacy instruction. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as, “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Critical literacy is a set of tools used by teachers to dissect texts and look at multiple viewpoints. Many teachers use the following questions to dissect texts: Who has the power? Who benefits? Whose voice is heard in this text? By offering students and educators tools and resources to change their instruction, varying perspectives can be seen and valued for all students. I believe that critical literacy is an essential skill for students in all disciplines; it allows students to embrace and expect different points of view in all aspects of their studies and in their lives. It also opens their minds to different perspectives which is an important skill for all students. Morrell (2010) garners attention towards critical literacy practices, calling this a “national crisis.”

Critical literacy is a matter of life and death. Students, families, communities, and neighborhoods simply cannot survive in the 21st century without raising literacy

rates. At a time when U.S. attention has turned to education, we need to make this point loud and clear. We have invested in banks, we have invested in war, and we have invested in a number of initiatives that, while important to our national security and welfare, are not nearly as important to our future as the education of U.S. children (Morrell, 2010, *p. 54*).

In addition to calling attention to critical literacy in American classrooms, Morrell (2010) also makes a plea for creating a shared vision around critical literacy. He argues, “critical literacy--it has to be about developing voice, agency, and the power of production across traditional and new media genres. Literacy has to be empowering, or else what is the point of demanding it?” (Morell, 2010, *p. 54*)

Giving students a voice and empowering them to have agency in their own learning is what makes critical literacy such an important framework. I believe that if students embrace different perspectives, they will become more responsible citizens. Ultimately, this aligns with my core values as an educator. As Dewey (1916) states, “Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not preparation for life but is life itself” (Dewey, 1916, *p. 239*). By offering students culturally relevant, critical literacy experiences they are more likely to be engaged because they are inspired and invested in learning. This project is focused at looking at specific ways that educators can engage in both culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy. Not because they are “buzz words,” rather because I believe that this will truly make a difference for students and their education.

Growing up in an urban district, it is clear to me that we have systemic racism in not only our school districts, but our society as a whole. This project is my own personal way to contribute to dismantling systemic racism and allowing both teachers and students alternative ways to interrogate their own biases and views as they encounter text and engage in literacy experiences. This research is important to me as an elementary principal, because I know how much it takes to engage students in learning. As a former classroom teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, literacy coach, district leader and now an elementary school principal, I have seen how important it is for students to feel seen, heard and valued as individuals. This is why culturally relevant teaching is essential to me as an educator, parent and citizen. I want to be a part of an education system that helps support students and meet their needs. As an educator and school principal, I am passionate about culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy because I believe these are ways that students are able to be engaged, encouraged to think critically and to be included in their own educational journey.

Ladson-Billings (2009) offers this definition of culturally relevant teaching as, “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, 20). Her definition is an important anchor in this research because she has named some specific ideas about how to shift pedagogy for teachers which can have a positive impact on students, specifically African American students in our country.

As I consider the systemic racism in our country, there is also a persistent “opportunity/achievement gap” for students of color. It’s important to ground this gap in data. When looking at the 2019 results for NAEP, The National Assessment of Educational Progress, there is a consistent gap in performance between white students and students of color, as demonstrated in Table 1.1 and 1.2. There is complexity surrounding testing and how students interpret the information, however there is still a persistent gap. According to NAEP data, there is a twenty-six point gap in scale score averages between white and black fourth grade students. There is a twenty-one point gap between white and hispanic or latinx students and a twenty-six point gap between white and Native American students. Asian students outscore white students by seven scale score points. This gap persists when evaluating 2019 NAEP reading data for eighth grade students. The gap between white and black students is twenty-eight points and the gap between White and Hispanic or Latinx students is twenty points. The gap between white and Native American students is twenty-four points. Asian students continue to score the highest with a nine point advantage over white students.

See Table 1.1: NAEP report on reading, grade 4

Table 1.1: NAEP Report on Reading, grade 4

READING GRADE 4					
Average score	2019 score	2019 compared to			
		2017	2009	1998	1992 ¹
White	230	↓2	◇	↑6	↑6
Black	204	↓3	◇	↑11	↑12
Hispanic	209	◇	↑4	↑16	↑12
Asian/Pacific Islander	237	◇	◇	↑23	↑21
American Indian/Alaska Native	204	◇	◇	‡	‡
Two or More Races	226	◇	◇	‡	‡

Table 1.2: NAEP 2019 report on reading, grade 8

READING GRADE 8					
Average score	2019 score	2019 compared to			
		2017	2009	1998	1992 ¹
White	272	↓3	◇	◇	↑5
Black	244	↓5	↓2	◇	↑7
Hispanic	252	↓4	↑3	↑9	↑11
Asian/Pacific Islander	281	◇	↑7	◇	↑13
American Indian/Alaska Native	248	↓5	◇	‡	‡
Two or More Races	267	↓5	◇	‡	◇

In looking at the proportion of student proficiency at various grade levels, there is a large gap between white students and students of color. The gap between white students and African American students was a thirty-four point gap in 2018. This large of an achievement gap calls for attention and a need for systemic change.

As you look at Table 1.3: Proportion of students proficient at grade level on MCA III tests in 2018, you can see the gap between white students and students of color.

Table 1.3 Proportion of student proficiency for MCA III tests in 2018

Proportion of students proficient at grade level
on MCA III tests in 2018

	Grade 4 Reading	Grade 8 Math
White students	65%	65%
American Indian/Alaska Native students	31%	25%
Asian students	48%	63%
Black students	31%	29%
Hispanic students	32%	35%
Students eligible for free/reduced-price meals	36%	36%
All students	56%	57%

It is this achievement gap and the opportunity gap that we have in our current school system that has propelled me to embark on this research project. I want to be a part of the solution, offering concrete ideas and strategies to change our classrooms and schools one by one. My hope is that we can move towards a more equitable school environment. One of my favorite quotes about equity that resonates with my own beliefs is a statement by Aguilar (2013), she says:

In its most simplistic definition, equity means that every child gets what he or she needs in schools—every child, regardless of where she comes from, what she looks like, who her parents are, what her temperament is, or what she shows up knowing or not knowing...Equity is about outcomes and experiences—for every child, every day (Aguilar, p. xiii).

This is an important statement because it frames what I see as an opportunity to change the opportunity gap we have in this country. If we can change the way schools and classrooms view literacy, we can begin to alter the outcomes for students every single

day. This dissertation is personal, in that I want the research and tools found in this paper to make a difference, one child, one school and one district at a time. Baldwin wrote several years ago about the gaps in opportunity for African American students. Unfortunately, many years later, his words are still relevant and an issue for our society to address.

“These are all our children, and we will benefit by or pay for what they become.”

~James Baldwin

One of my goals as a researcher and an educational leader is to provide quality professional development that allows teachers the opportunity to reflect on their practice and to have access to best practices in education. This particular project is focused on how professional development can support teachers in learning about and reflecting on culturally relevant instruction and critical literacy. This project is personal. I hope to provide opportunities to dismantle systemic racism in our schools by offering strategies, tools and ideas to change teachers' mindsets and their approach to planning and instruction.

My hope is that this project will offer teachers and schools a specific framework for thinking and engaging in culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy. As an educator and administrator, I have seen a stand still in practices when there are not tools and protocols to utilize. People simply don't know what they don't know and that leads to continued systemic racism in our schools. My vision is that by offering tools and protocols to support critical literacy and culturally relevant teaching practices, we can shift this paradigm as a nation. One child, one classroom and one district at a time.

Chapter 2 will be a review of the literature for both culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy as well as a review of the literature on professional development. Chapter 3 will focus on my research methodology and how the research will be analyzed. Chapter 4 will focus on the research process and the information gleaned from the elite interviews and focus groups. Chapter 5 will be a summary of the research project overall; it will discuss the outcomes from the research and potential next steps for improving professional development and the best tools for culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy based on teacher and professional development leader input.

Ladson-Billings (2009) work informs this dissertation in many ways. She focuses on successful ways to teach African American students. She provides hope and context for changing the prevalent achievement gap in not only Minnesota, but across our country.

Ladson-Billings has set up her work to focus on a new reality for African American students, and I would add all students of color in this country. Education is often focused on a dream for something better, something that we wish for our children. For African American civil rights leaders, the “American Dream” has often been challenged. Ladson-Billings remains hopeful however,

One of the most tangible vehicles for these dreams has been education—even when it was substandard and alienating. African Americans believed that somehow education could make their dreams a reality. I too believe and hope that if we can dream it, we can surely do it (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 156).

As a fellow dreamer and a leader trying to make a difference in our world of education, I will share a poem from Hughes that encapsulates the hope for this work:

Hold fast to dreams

For if dreams die

Life is a broken winged butterfly...

~Langston Hughes, 1951

This dissertation is for all of the dreamers and students who deserve an education system that serves all students, regardless of the color of their skin, their gender, background, or their zip code. As a servant leader, I am writing and researching to serve our students, families and our community.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The literature review will focus on three areas, professional development practices, culturally relevant teaching strategies, and critical literacy as ways to support students in their learning. The prevalent achievement gap between white and African American students is not acceptable. As a system, we must change this for students. This project is focused on offering professional development opportunities for teachers to help them learn about culturally relevant and critical literacy strategies, allow them to reflect on their practices and evolve in their mindsets and planning practices. While it's difficult to change mindsets and perspectives, that is the goal. As this literature review will reveal, there is strong evidence that teachers can and should change their mindsets and perspectives related to culturally relevant and critical literacy.

My research questions are focused on professional development which provides knowledge and strategies for teachers on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy. My primary research question is: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? My secondary question is What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders?

Professional Development

The first section of this literature review is focused on professional development best practices. In order to implement any type of best practice, there must be professional development offered and implemented providing professionals new content, ideas and

ways of implementing practices. Providing opportunities for teachers to reflect, collaborate and evolve in their thinking is essential. In addition to this time for reflection, it is essential to offer teachers frameworks and tools to continue their learning independently and in teams.

This part of the literature review will examine professional development and the various ways that teachers can be supported. This section is broken down into the following sections:

- Opportunities for reflection
- Creating a network of support and collaboration
- Effective professional development
- Providing ongoing support
- Modeling and ongoing coaching
- Professional development in the United States.

Opportunities for reflection. While it's challenging to measure reflective changes in teachers, this is the goal of many educational leaders who are facilitating professional development. As Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage (2005) stated, "reflective practice has offered a space for teachers to bring together observations, classroom experiences, and academic knowledge to form plans with specific steps and purposes for future action." Being reflective is an important way to support students and to provide an opportunity for growth and change. In a 2018 study, researchers provide a helpful definition for reflection in their research study:

We defined reflection as an ongoing, recursive process that practitioners engage

in as they deeply analyze the connections between aspects of professional practice. For teachers, this includes their instructional planning, teaching, and assessment of student learning. We understand products of reflection, such as written notes, learning community conversations, and individual commentaries to be momentary windows into practitioners' ongoing reflective thinking (Allen, K, Brodeur, K., Israelson, M., Martin-Kerr, K-G, Ortmann, L, & Peterson, D.S., 2018, p. 83).

In their research, this group of researchers used a modified rubric that measured teacher reflection. This helped them measure the impact of professional development in teacher candidates. Here is a summary of the rubric, Table 2.1 with the topics and basic headings. The full rubric can be found in the original article. What's helpful about this rubric, is that it is a tool for professional development facilitators and researchers to measure the impact of a teacher's level of reflection based on specific areas.

Table 2.1 Professional Development Rubric

	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
Identification of a specific aspect of the lesson			
Perspectives			
Instructional Decisions			
Rationale for instructional decisions			
Commitment to action			

(Modified from Risko, V. J., Vukelich, C., & Roskos, K., 2009)

Creating a network of professional colleagues. In their book, *Culturally Proficient Coaching: Supporting Educators to Create Equitable Schools* by Lindsey, D., R. Martinez and R.Lindsey (2007), the authors support the notion that professional learning is best supported by a network of colleagues and support. “The research is clear: learning is a social construct” (p. 8).

In response to the call for closing the achievement gap, some educators have developed professional, collaborative learning communities (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek 2004; Louis, Kruse, & Marks 1996; Reeves, 2000; Smoker, 1999). These collaborative communities are transforming schools from environments of blame to environments of collaboration. (p. 8)

In support of this work, Aguilar (2013) writes, “First a coaching stance views teachers, principals, and all the adults who work in schools as capable of changing practices--coaches fundamentally believe that people can learn and change” (p. 5). In addition to “stand alone professional development,” follow up coaching and support can help shift mindsets and teaching outlooks. Aguilar goes on to say, “coaching is a form of professional development that brings out the best in people, uncovers strengths and skills, builds effective teams, cultivates compassion, and builds emotionally resilient educators” (p. 6).

It’s important to consider that professional development can promote a shift in mindset and teaching practices. Measuring teacher mindset is challenging, but the evidence of change can be seen in how teachers plan, collaborate with colleagues and organize and supply their classrooms and implement instructional practices. As the

research focus groups and elite interviews are conducted later in this project, there will be an analysis of how professional development, collaboration and follow up coaching conversations contribute to changes in mindset and planning practices.

Effective professional development. Bates and Morgan (2018) offer seven elements of “Professional development should positively influence teacher knowledge and practice and, in turn, student learning” (p. 623). They lay out a strong framework for professional development practices that are informative to this research project.

Element 1 Focus on Content: Bates and Morgan discuss the importance of professional development offering strong content instruction for teachers. Using book studies, articles and bringing in experts to teach about content are all viable methods.

Element 2 Active Learning: Making learning meaningful and relevant for teachers helps them unpack new content and understand how to apply their new content knowledge to their own practices. Examples include allowing teachers to ask and answer questions, engage in dialogue, examine student work and artifacts and reflect on issues in their own practices.

Element 3 Support for Collaboration: The need to collaborate is an important part of professional development. Collaboration can happen in one on one settings, small groups and whole group settings. By making learning social, it allows teachers to collaborate with one another. It’s important to have time and space for authentic collegiality; otherwise it can be contrived and superficial.

Element 4 Models of Effective Practice: Modeling new practices are important for professional learners. Being sure to show not tell, is an important phrase we must

remember in professional development. Looking at videos, observing colleagues and studying student work are all important examples of modeling professional development and helping teachers learn from one another. It's important to use a variety of ways to model professional development strategies because no two students or student groups are alike.

Element 5 Coaching and Expert Support: There are many ways that experts can support educators. University professionals, literacy coaches and other teacher leaders can serve as a coach or expert in a role of support for professional learning. These individuals can provide opportunities for collaboration, learning, active support to change teaching outcomes. Teaching can be an isolating job, so it's important to open the doors and offer collaborative coaching and support for teachers.

Element 6 Feedback and Reflection: Feedback and reflection are essential, but are very different. Offering authentic and supportive feedback is important, but it must be built on trust and a supportive stance. Using feedback and reflection are important in moving teacher practice and introducing new content and strategies.

Element 7: Sustained Duration: It's important to professional development to be ongoing and meaningful. One shot workshops are not an effective way to change teacher practice. To have an impact on teacher reflection and learning, there must be follow through and ongoing support. Job-embedded professional development is often seen as effective because there are opportunities for cycles of support and reflection.

Guskey (1991) also lays out factors that make professional development more effective. He highlights five factors that support effective professional development. He

notes that, “It is well known that the change process involved in professional development is extremely complex” (p. 240). In looking at Guskey’s five factors we can compare these with the seven elements shared by Bates and Morgan (2018).

Recognize that change is an individual process: Guskey points out that change can happen at a macro level in organizations, but ultimately professional development and change are very personal and can be a very vulnerable experience for people. He recommends noting that change can be challenging in a straight forward and empathetic way to help alleviate potential anxiety.

Think Big, Start Small: Guskey encourages organizations to take small, incremental steps in implementing professional changes. This helps to manage the challenges and allows people to adjust to pedagogical and systems changes. “Professional development activities should be designed with a vision of what is possible. In addition, that vision should be accompanied by a strategic plan that includes specific goals for three to five years into the future” (1991, p. 242).

Work in Teams: Guskey recommends that people work in teams across an organization for maximum success and input. “...it is imperative that all aspects of a professional development program be fashioned to involve teams of individuals working together” (p. 242). He recommends that people work in teams on a regular basis to allow for consistent input and to provide people regular opportunities to share ideas and perspectives in a collegial atmosphere. In addition, Guskey encourages a team approach to share the workload and enhance the quality of the work produced.

Include Procedures For Personal Feedback On Results: If the new practices are going to be sustained, there must be opportunities for regular feedback on the effects of the changes. Feedback must be given in a variety of ways to ensure lasting impact.

Provide Continued Support and Follow-Up: There are very few people that can move from a professional development experience straight into implementation. Time and practice are essential in making incremental changes. Guskey warns that this is the most forgotten step in many professional development situations. Without continued support and follow-up, changes may not be sustained. “This crucial support for professionals can be offered in a variety of ways. Joyce and Showers (1988) suggested that it take the form of coaching--providing practitioners with technical feedback, guiding them in adapting the new practices to their unique contextual conditions, and helping them to analyze the effects of their efforts” (Guskey, 1991, p. 244). It is this type of follow up that will help these new skills and practices a natural part of a teacher’s repertoire.

Providing ongoing support. McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe (2019) explore an international outlook on teacher professional development. They look at the different needs and preferences in accessing professional learning and support. They discuss the importance of professional learning being a process and having ongoing support for teachers. It should also be a part of the teacher's daily practice. Some teachers change their beliefs without changing their practices. Others change their teaching practice but observe no impact on student learning or performance” (McElearney et. al, 2019, p. 434). This research focuses on the characteristics of effective professional development. There should be an opportunity to engage in ongoing reflection. “Research confirms that some

teachers engage in professional development activities and never attempt to implement change in their classrooms (Guskey 2002).

Focused on student outcomes and incorporating opportunities to practice: Professional development should be focused on student's needs and how it will impact their performance and development. The content and activities should help teachers learn how to meet their needs and fulfill subject area mastery. It should also include a period of reflection and analysis to ask if it has reached these student needs.

Collaborative: Collaboration should take place between teacher professionals engaging in joint work and within groups with the goal of supporting one another. Collaboration can mean observing others, having discussions and supporting one another through online platforms. McElearney et. al argue that engagement increases when teachers have opportunities for collaboration.

Reflective: It's important to have time for reflection to think about professional development and new skills or pedagogy learned. "Dunst (2015) identified opportunities for reflection as a key element of in-service professional development associated with positive teacher and student outcomes" (McElearney et. al, 2019, p. 437).

Supported by specialist expertise: Effective professional development must be supported by expert input via training and or research designs. Specialist support can take on many forms of instruction: modeling, coaching or scaffolding by colleagues/other professionals. It can also be supported through literature; books, articles, blogs and other forms of written and verbal communication based on expert research.

Sustained over time: Research shows that for teacher professional learning to be effective, it must be sustained over time with multiple opportunities to interact with content and try out new approaches in their classrooms and discuss with colleagues. Research also points out that one off workshops are not effective in changing teacher practices; rather sustained opportunities over time are more effective and impactful.

Supportive school leadership and culture: Research shows that school leadership support and culture also support professional development and are key factors for successful implementation over time. In 2015, Cordingley spoke of the importance of school leaders in putting teacher professional development at the forefront of their school goals. Finding time for resources and finding expertise and resources to support teachers, especially those who may be reluctant to engage in learning.

Incorporates models of effective practice: Teachers must have effective models of practice to envision change. This can take multiple formats, such as videos, demonstrations, lessons, curriculum plans, peer visits and school visits. Having these models allows teachers to envision alternative ways of instruction.

Table 2.2 Characteristics of Effective Teacher Professional Development

Collaborative	Yes	Incorporates models of effective practice	Yes
Supportive School Leadership and culture	Yes	Supported by Specialist Expertise	Yes
Reflective	Yes	Sustained over time & focuses on student outcomes	Yes

Adapted from, McElearney et. al, 2019

Modeling and ongoing coaching. Joyce and Showers (2002) are seminal professional development coaching researchers and have done research over the years on the importance of coaching as a professional implementation strategy. Joyce and Showers (2002) address ways to implement professional development effectively. They share ways that coaching contributed to the transfer of learning:

1. They practiced new strategies more consistently and with greater skill than teachers who did not receive coaching along with initial training.
2. They adapted to the strategies more appropriately and embedded their own goals vs. uncoached teachers.
3. They retained and increased their skills over a period of time, and uncoached teachers did not.
4. They were more likely to explain the new models of teaching to their students and were more likely to understand the purpose of the strategy and the behaviors expected of them.

Joyce and Showers work shows the importance of follow up coaching to ensure implementation of professional development strategies and application of those strategies. “Joyce and Showers’ extensive research and experience in professional development suggest a number of practical implications for school leaders in approaching their own professional development and that of their teacher colleagues” (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 5).

Joyce and Showers encourage school leaders to use coaching as a systemic school-wide implementation strategy. They warn against evaluative coaching, which has

become pervasive in many school districts. Joyce and Showers share the following opinion on evaluative coaching models:

They regard the largely evaluative and supervisory models of peer coaching which appear to be ‘normative’ in the literature as disappointing. They acknowledge that engaging collectively in training and working collaboratively in teams to implement new learning and evaluate its effect is difficult, but conclude that “it is well worth the effort, both in terms of cohesion and student learning (Joyce and Showers, 2002, p. 4).

It’s important to note that coaching models are important in supporting the development and implementation of content and professional development.

If the aim of professional development is to help teachers to teach students in ways which lead to learning improvements, leaders might want to consider the most effective ways of monitoring professional development activities to evaluate their impact on student achievement (Joyce and Showers, 2002, p. 5).

How schools engage in professional development and follow up with the content is an essential consideration. The research shows that follow up collaboration, modeling and coaching are imperative to implementation and a shift in teacher practices. In addition to coaching, it’s important to have leadership that supports and encourages a coaching and collaboration model. In looking at how to include culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy into a professional development frame, we look at additional research. Senge (2006) suggests a systems approach and describes how we can build these. He says, “learning organizations,” organizations where people

continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns and thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (p. 3).

Nieto (2013) states, “How teachers learn to teach with a social justice perspective depends on the kinds of teacher education programs they attend, the inservice professional development they receive in their schools and beyond, and the culture of collaboration in their schools” (Nieto, 2013, p. 23).

Professional development in the United States. The amount of professional development that teachers receive is another area of concern in our growing opportunity gap. As we look at Nieto (2013) and Darling-Hammond’s (2010) analysis of the gap between teacher preparation and professional development in the United States vs. other countries around the world, we are well below the international average for teacher preparation and reflection. In another review of a broad range of studies of inservice professional development, Chung Wei and her colleagues (2010) found that the kind of sustained teacher learning that increases student learning requires from 49-100 hours of contact on a single focus. Unfortunately in most cases, teachers in the United States received less than eight hours on any given topic (Nieto, 2013, p. 23).

The United States is falling behind other countries in both teacher preparation professional development and inservice teacher professional development opportunities.

As Darling-Hammond (2010) found out that teachers’ academic background, preparation for teaching, certification status, and teaching experience have the greatest influence on student achievement. In a more recent review of the

Alliance for Excellent Education on the educational systems of Finland, Ontario, and Singapore (all among the most high-achieving nations), the researchers found that what they had in common were coherent and complementary policies in recruitment, preparation, induction, continuing professional and career development, and teacher retention (Rothman & Darling-Hammond, 2011).

Nieto (2013) points out that as a nation, we are falling behind as a system and are not giving our educators the preparation or the continued professional development to be competitive across the world. This is widening the opportunity gap, rather than solving issues for our students. As we examine how this looks for meaningful professional development for teachers and leaders on a wide-scale scope is daunting. It's also why this work has oftentimes been 'set aside.' Not because it's not important work, but rather because it's difficult work.

My research questions are focused on the impact of professional development on culturally relevant and critical literacy. How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? The second research question is: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders?

These research questions guide the research design in the next chapter and allows readers to unpack ways to evaluate professional development strategies related to culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally relevant teaching practices have become somewhat of a buzz phrase in the education world lately, but without common understanding and definitions, this can become an empty promise. Making these words come to fruition in our teaching practices should be our goal. Just because this is a declared goal doesn't make it a reality.

One of the reasons that Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers* (2009) work resonates is because her work focuses on how to successfully teach African-American children. As we have seen from the NAEP data, there is a prevalent achievement gap and current teaching practices in the United States are not serving our students. In 2006, Muhammad shares research from Harvard University focused on the Harvard Achievement Gap Initiative (AGI), which is led by renowned scholar, Ronald Ferguson. AGI is dedicated to the study and eradication of the achievement gap, which is defined as:

The disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized tests scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures. It is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic peers, and the similar academic disparity between students from low-income families and those who are better off (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011, p. 13-14).

Ladson-Billings stated, "I wanted to ask another question, a question that would explore success models. I wanted to know what is right with African American students'

education and what happens in classrooms where teachers, students, and parents seem to get it right” (Ladson-Billings, G., 2009, vii). Ladson-Billings also focuses on pedagogy of practice versus the specific teachers. It is this broad approach to pedagogy that has made an impact on many districts across the United States’ outlook on culturally relevant teaching. Districts have an ethical impetus to use culturally relevant curriculum and instructional practices to serve students and work to close the achievement gap.

Culturally relevant teaching defined. One might ask about the meaning of cultural relevance, how is this defined? Ladson-Billings defines cultural relevance this way, “it moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. Thus culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 19). Ladson-Billings focuses on pedagogy of practice versus the specific teachers. She calls out the importance of pedagogy in her work. She states that her work is strongly aligned with Giroux and Simon’s thoughts on critical pedagogy:

Pedagogy refers to a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations. It can be understood as a practice through which people are incited to acquire a particular “moral character.” As both a political and practical activity, it attempts to influence the occurrence and qualities of experiences. When one practices pedagogy, one acts with the intent of creating experiences that will organize and disorganize a variety of understandings of our natural and social world in

particular ways...Pedagogy is a concept which draws attention to the processes through which knowledge is produced (Ladson-Billings, G. 2009, p. 15).

Ladson-Billings examines not only the classroom interactions of teachers she studied in *Dreamkeepers*, but she looks more broadly into this topic.

Because of this pedagogical view, I went into the classrooms intending to examine both “the political and the practical”. I wanted to see not only why a certain kind of teaching helped the students to be more successful academically but also how this kind of teaching supported and encouraged students to use their prior knowledge to make sense of the world and to work toward improving it” (Ladson-Billings, G. 2009, p. 15).

Culturally Relevant Teaching in action. Ladson-Billings has broken down culturally relevant teaching into five key areas that are important to consider in looking at instruction from multiple content areas. She discusses the following in her book, *Dreamkeepers*:

1. When students are treated as competent they are likely to demonstrate competence.
2. When teachers provide instructional “scaffolding,” students can move from what they know to what they need to know.
3. The focus of the classroom must be instructional.
4. Real education is about extending students’ thinking and abilities.
5. Effective teaching involves in-depth knowledge of both the students and the subject matter (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 135-136).

Ladson-Billings work has likely influenced Hammond's (2013) research on Culturally Responsive teaching. In her work, Hammond has further expanded this thinking to create the *Ready for Rigor Framework* in 2013. Examine Figure 1.2 to look at the ways in which Hammond has expanded this thinking to create a framework for schools and educationally focused environments. Hammond writes that, "More than a motivational tool, culturally responsive teaching is a serious and powerful tool for accelerating student learning" (Hammond, 2015, p. 3). Hammond argues that it is key to move students from dependent learners to independent learners, Hammond states:

It is not just a matter of grit or mindset. Grit and mindset are necessary but not sufficient by themselves. We have to help dependent students develop new cognitive skills and habits of mind that will actually increase their brain power. Students with increased brainpower can accelerate their own learning, meaning they know how to learn new content and improve their weak skills on their own (Hammond, 2015, p. 15).

Hammond breaks down the "Ready for Rigor Framework" into four quadrants with a focus question in the center. The focus question states, "Students are ready for rigor and independent learning (Hammond, 2015, p. 17-19). The four quadrants are broken down into these areas:

- Awareness
- Learning Partnerships
- Information Processing
- Community of Learners and Learning Environment

Awareness is focused on understanding your own cultural lens and developing a sociopolitical consciousness, which means having “an understanding that we live in a racialized society that gives unearned privilege to some while others experience unearned disadvantage because of race, gender, class or language” (Hammond, 2015, p. 18).

Having an awareness of self is critical in setting up a culturally responsive learning environment. It’s also about having a cultural humility in your practice.

Learning Partnerships is focused on the importance of relationships in a school and classroom environment. It’s focused on both building relationships between the teacher and students as well as setting up conditions for learning partnerships within the classroom/school community. Hammond writes, “Culturally responsive teachers take advantage of the fact that our brains are wired for connection” (Hammond, 2015, p. 19).

Information Processing refers to the teacher expanding student processing so that students can engage in more complex learning. Hammond points out that the teacher “orchestrates learning so it builds student’s brain power in culturally congruent ways” (Hammond, 2015, p. 19).

Community Building is focused on both the environment and the social environment where students can learn in effective and safe ways. Hammond points out that when teachers are creating this environment, they “use cultural practices and orientations to create a socially and intellectually safe space” (Hammond, 2015, p 20). See Table 2.3, The Main Components of Hammond’s Ready for Rigor Framework.

Table 2.3 The Main Components of Hammond's Ready for Rigor Framework

Awareness		Learning Partnerships
	Students ready for rigor and independent learning	
Information processing		Community of Learners & Learning Environment

Adapted from Hammond's Ready for Rigor Framework (2015, p. 17)

Components of the Awareness quadrant include:

- Understand the three levels of culture
- Recognize cultural archetypes of individualism and collectivism
- Understand how the brain learns
- Acknowledge the socio-political context around race and language
- Know and own your cultural lens
- Recognize your brain's triggers around race and culture
- Broaden your interpretation of culturally and linguistically diverse students learning behaviors

Components of Learning Partnerships:

- Reimagine the student and teacher relationship as a partnership
- Take responsibility to reduce students' social-emotional stress from stereotype threat and microaggressions
- Balance giving students both care and push
- Help students cultivate a positive mindset and sense of self-efficacy

- Give students language to talk about their learning moves

Components of Information Processing:

- Provide appropriate challenge in order to stimulate brain growth to increase intellectual capacity
- Help students process new content using methods from oral traditions
- Connect new content to culturally relevant examples and metaphors from students' community and everyday lives
- Provide students authentic opportunities to process content
- Teach students cognitive routines using the brain's natural learning systems
- Use formative assessments and feedback to increase intellectual capacity

Components of Community of Learners and Learning Environment

- Create an environment that is intellectually and socially safe for learning
- Make space for student voice and agency
- Build classroom culture and learning around communal (sociocultural) talk and task structures
- Use classroom rituals and routines to support a culture of learning
- Use principles of restorative justice to manage conflicts and redirect negative behavior

At the center of this model, Hammond notes that students are “ready for rigor and independent learning with the following language:

- Affirmation
- Instructional conversation

- Validation
- Wise feedback (Hammond, 2015, p. 17)

In using Hammond's Ready for Rigor Framework and culturally relevant teaching practices, educators should focus on the following teaching practices as a guide for making culturally relevant teaching an ingrained part of their practice:

- Integrate universal cultural elements and themes into the classroom
- Use cultural practices and orientations to create a socially and intellectually safe space
- Set up rituals and routines that reinforce self-directed learning and academic inquiry (Hammond, 2015, p. 20)

Culturally relevant teaching and coaching adult learning. In my experience as an instructional coach, district and building leader, it can be hard to encourage people to talk about culture and focus on culturally relevant teaching practices. Hammond (2015) gives some practical tips and tools for making this work actionable. She breaks down different levels of understanding culture:

Surface Culture: This level is made up of observable and concrete elements of culture such as food, dress, music, and holidays. This level of culture has a low emotional charge so that changes don't create great anxiety in a person or group.

Shallow Culture: This level is made up of the unspoken rules around everyday social interactions and norms, such as courtesy, attitudes toward elders, nature of friendship, concepts of time, personal space between people, nonverbal communication, rules about

eye contact, or appropriate touching. It's at this level of culture that we put into action our deep cultural values.

Deep Culture: This level is made up of tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern our worldview. It also contains the cosmology (view of good or bad) that guides ethics, spirituality, health, and theories of group harmony (i.e. competition or cooperation). Deep culture also governs how we learn new information. Elements at this level have intense emotional charge (Hammond, 2015, pp. 22-23).

These levels of culture are similar to Banks' (1980) levels of cultural engagement. Banks' research names four levels of cultural engagement: They move from a surface level approach to a much deeper level of emotional impact. The first level is a contributions approach to integration, the second is an ethnic additive approach, the third is a transformation approach, and the last one is a decision making and social action approach. This model will be shared in more detail later in this paper. Many researchers and professional development experts have used the iceberg model as an analogy to look at levels of culture. Hammond uses a Cultural Tree, Figure 2.1 as an analogy to express these levels of depth.

Figure 2.1 Adapted from Hammond's Culture Tree, p. 24



The leaves represent surface culture: Observable patterns,
Low emotional impact on trust. Also;

Shallow culture: Unspoken rules.
High emotional impact on trust.

The roots represent deep culture: Collective unconscious (beliefs and norms) intense emotional impact on trust. (Hammond, 2015, p. 24)

Many educators and teachers may lament that they have several different cultures represented in their classroom and that it may feel impossible to have a deep understanding of all of these cultures. Hammond responds to this conundrum by breaking down cultures into cultural archetypes. She says, “There are two cultural archetypes that I think are important for the culturally responsive teacher to know”, Collectivism and Individualism. Dutch sociologist, Hofstede, found that approximately 20% of the world has an individualistic culture, while 80% practice a collectivist culture” (Hammond, 2015 p. 25).

Further, Hammond states: “Most European cultures were rooted in an individualistic culture, while the collectivist worldview is common among Latin American, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and many Slavic cultures (Figure 3). Collectivist societies emphasize relationships, interdependence within a community, and cooperative learning. Individualistic societies emphasize individual achievement and independence” (Hammond, 2015, p. 25). Many early immigrants in the United States came from Europe and fit with the American dominant culture which is also individualistic. However cultures in the U.S. that have African American, Latino, Asian and Native American cultures lean more toward collectivism. See table 2.4

Table 2.4 Some of the Features of Individualist and Collectivist Cultures

Individualism	Collectivism
Focused on independence and individual achievement	Focused on interdependence and group success
Emphasizes self-reliance and the belief that one is supposed to take care of himself to get ahead	Emphasizes reliance on the collective wisdom or resources of the group and the belief that group members take care of each other to get ahead
Learning happens through individual study and reading individually	Learning happens through group interaction and dialogue
Individual contributions and status/achievement are important	Group dynamics and harmony are important overall
Competitive in nature	Collaborative work
Technical/analytical	Relationship oriented

(Table 2.4 Adapted from Hammond, 2015, p. 26)

It should be pointed out that there are continuums that operate within cultures and individual people. A person may be from the United States or a European country and take on a more collectivist perspective because of their cultural upbringing, family outlook or personality, but this is an interesting way to look at worldwide cultural dynamics and outlooks.

Gay's work is an essential part of the research base for culturally responsive and relevant teaching. Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as, "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Gay uses the term culturally responsive, while other researchers use the term culturally relevant. In this paper, I will

use culturally relevant teaching practice to have a consistent term, although both terms are valid and well respected by their peers.

Gay (2002) asserts five essential elements to culturally responsive teaching:

1. Developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity
2. Including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum
3. Demonstrating caring and building communities
4. Communicating with ethnically diverse students
5. Responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction

Ladson-Billings adds to this definition by pointing out that culturally responsive teaching is “specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). This empowerment extends beyond individual situations and students extend this to multiple situations, embracing the value and perspective of other cultures. “As students begin to know and value their own cultures, they also begin to know and value the cultures of others, seeing them as assets essential to innovation, empathy and mutual respect” (Gay, 2010: Kress, 1995). In addition to students seeing their own culture, it’s important to recognize that by embracing your own culture you are not dismissing other cultures. *“Preservation of one’s own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for others cultures”* Cesar Chavez, Mexican American Activist (Hammond, 2015, p. 21).

Hollie (2012) writes about culturally responsive teaching frameworks in his book, *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning*. He shares a

framework that encompasses Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy

Elements. See Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy Elements

Responsive Management	Responsive Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Movement ● Attention signals ● Ways of discussing and responding ● collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● selecting academic words and content-area words ● focus on key strategies ● context ● word parts ● synonyms ● reinforcement activities
Responsive Literacy	Responsive Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● culturally responsive supplemental text ● read-alouds as storytelling ● effective literacy strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● switching ● revising ● role playing

(Adapted from Hollie's (2012) Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy Elements)

Culturally relevant teaching and social justice. In addition to culturally relevant teaching pedagogy, Nieto (2013) expands on this definition, she examines the definition of culturally relevant teaching from a Social Justice perspective. She defines social justice as having four components:

1. It challenges, confronts, and disrupts misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to or exacerbate structural inequality and discrimination.
2. It provides all students with the resources they need to learn to their full potential. This includes both material resources (books, curriculum, adequate funding, etc.) and emotional resources (believing in their ability and worth, caring for them as individuals and learners, honoring both their individuality

and their group membership, having high expectations for them, and giving them the cultural and social capital to succeed, among others).

3. It draws on students' talents and strengths. This requires having a critical perspective while also rejecting deficit theories about children of particular backgrounds, and understanding that all children have strengths that can enhance their education.
4. Finally, social justice in education is about creating a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and supports agency for social change, in effect providing students with an apprenticeship in their role in a democratic society (Nieto & Bode 2012).

Nieto (2012) captures an important aspect of culturally relevant teaching—she unpacks the political underpinnings of education. Many refer to the systemic racism upon which our country is founded making education a political pillar. One of the founders of culturally relevant teaching focused on this premise. Freire (1970) stated that “teaching is always political because it determines who benefits and who loses when decisions about pedagogy, curriculum, policies, and practices are made.”

In this same vein, Nieto (2012) examines the importance of social justice when teachers are considering culturally relevant practices. She points out some clear practices in Zeichner's 2003 work to narrow “the achievement gap,” teachers should, among other things:

- Have a clear sense of their own identities
- Have, and communicate, high expectations for all their students

- Be committed to making a difference for their students, and believe they can do so
 - Work at forming a close bond with their students
 - Explicitly teach students the culture of the school while also helping them maintain a sense of ethnic and cultural pride and identity
 - Teach a curriculum that is academically challenging and multicultural
 - Understand that learning is collaborative and interactive
 - Encourage families to become involved in the education of their children
- (Nieto, 2013, p. 22).

Culturally relevant teaching in the classroom. What does culturally relevant teaching look like in the classroom? This next section will explore some of the research focused on classroom practices related to culturally relevant teaching. As Gorski and Swalwell (2015) share in their key principles of equity for all students, Principle 3. Students of all ages are primed for equity literacy. As Schrod, Fain & Hasty (2015) point out in their article, there are essential strategies related to culturally relevant teaching that can begin at a very young age. Dyson and Genishi (1994) share that all students need to tell and hear stories in order to understand their experience and those of others and organize them into tales of significant happenings.

Through stories, teachers learn their children's cultures, of their diverse experiences, and of their connections to family and friends. Moreover, through sharing stories—both children's own stories and those of professional authors—teachers and children create the potential for new connections that create them together in a new tale

Broad categories found in responses to culturally relevant texts (Scrodt, Fain & Hasty, 2015, p. 2) include the following:

- Retelling the Text
- Interacting with Family
- Demonstrating Self-Directed Emergent Writing
- Extending the Text

“According to the data, more than 300 of the entries produced involve retelling and extending the text, making up 68% of the total entries” (p. 596, Scrodt, Gillian Fain & Hasty, 2015). This information is essential in understanding the function of literacy interactions between students and the text, as well as their families. “This kind of classroom is marked by the infusion of culture throughout everyday literacies” (Scrodt, Fain & Hasty, 2015, p. 596). The examples of the entries noted here are important to thinking about culturally relevant teaching. By retelling and extending the text, students are able to make meaning and this is essential to culturally relevant teaching.

Most important is creating a plan for implementing a common understanding and setting aside time for professional development for teachers, leaders and other key staff to make such a strategy a reality for students. As Gorski & Swalwell (2015) point out:

The trouble lies in how so many diversity initiatives avoid or whitewash serious equity issues. It lies in the space between what marginalized students like Cynthia say their schools need to do to help them feel less marginalized and what many adults in those schools are comfortable doing in the name of multiculturalism (p. 35).

In order to move towards a stance of equity at the center of the equation, Gorski and Swalwell suggest that it is in our hands as educators:

It relies, as well, on teachers' abilities to cultivate in students a robust understanding about how people are treated by one another and by institutions, in addition to a general appreciation of diversity (Swalwell, 2011). The idea is to place equity, rather than culture, at the center of the diversity conversation” (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015, p. 36).

Gorski and Swalwell (2015) suggest starting with five guiding principles for districts embarking on an *equity literacy* framework:

Principle 1. Equity literacy is important in every subject area.

Principle 2. The most effective equity literacy approach is integrative and interdisciplinary.

Principle 3. Students of all ages are primed for equity literacy

Principle 4. Students from all backgrounds need equity literacy

Principle 5. Teaching for equity literacy is a political act—but not more so than not teaching for equity literacy.

Further examination of culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy has taken on multiple forms. In their (2013) article, Campbell and Parr examine various forms of digital landscapes which require readers to:

coordinate the acts of reading and writing; experience, create and engage in texts of many types; and accept literacy challenges that allow us to traverse formal and informal boundaries in and out of school potentially imagining geographies of

better worlds or alternative space and times (Jocson, 2006; Leander, 2003; Mahiri, 2004; Vasquez, 2010 as cited in Campbell and Parr, 2013, p. 136).

Campbell and Parr point out multiple structures in which students and educators can navigate and critically examine text. In Table 2.6, they share a model for strategic decisions made by the teacher and the corresponding navigational roles used by students to address issues of diversity and culturally relevant issues for students' lives.

Table 2.6 Key decisions and roles at the intersection of in-school and out of school practices

Some of the Key Decisions and Roles at the Intersection of In-School and Out of School Practices	
<p>Strategic decisions made by teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modeling for students and bringing their identity to school, interrogating and weaving together the texts of their lives and the world. ● Recognizing and planning for student interactions by allowing out-of-school and in-school experiences and contexts to intersect ● Multiple text opportunities with diverse texts for diverse purposes 	<p>Navigational roles used by students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Map Reader: learning and recognizing the similarities between coding practices to understand diverse texts (e.g. films, poetry, websites, lived experiences) ● Purposeful Traveller: going below surface level to include discussion of themes and underlying issues, multiple perspectives, and understanding of identity, stories, and experiences.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for student selected response, follow-up, and text creation including oral, print, dramatic, art, multimedia, lived experience, journaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chartmaker: exploration and interactions based on experiences, taking acting on social justice issues, and rewriting texts in response to such issues as race, class, age, gender, sexuality, and culture as relevant to students' lives.
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Campbell and Parr, 2013, p. 136

As I reflect on the research surrounding culturally relevant teaching practices, it's important to note that there is a strong relationship between professional development best practices and teaching practices. As a researcher, coach and teacher leader, I am seeking to make even stronger connections between these culturally relevant teaching and professional development and collaborative practices. I have created a table, 2.7 to make these connections clear in my own research and to help guide future professional development practices. (See Table 2.7 Connections between Professional Development and Culturally Relevant Teaching)

Table 2.7 Connections between Professional Development and Culturally Relevant Teaching

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development (for teachers)	Yes or no	Characteristics of Culturally relevant teaching practices (for students)	Yes or no
Collaborative	yes	Community and partnership based	yes
Supportive School Leadership and culture	yes	Caring and supportive learning communities	yes
Reflective	yes	Opportunities for students to reflect on their own cultures and beliefs	yes
Incorporates models of effective practice	yes	Uses research based culturally relevant best practices	yes
Supported by Specialist Expertise	yes	Supportive teachers that demonstrate culturally relevant teaching and planning practices	yes
Sustained over time & focuses on student outcomes	yes	Sustained over a students' school career and focused on the unique culture of students	yes

As we move into the next section of the literature review, there will be an examination of critical literacy, a component of culturally relevant teaching based on inquiry as a broader stance. My research questions rely on bringing teachers actionable

ways to incorporate culturally relevant practices to their literacy instruction. In my practice as an educator, and as a researcher, I have found that critical literacy is a concrete framework to apply to culturally relevant teaching practice. My primary research questions are focused on the impact of professional development related to culturally relevant and critical literacy. My primary research question is How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? My secondary question is What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders?

Critical Literacy

This next section will review the research focused on critical literacy. This is an important aspect of culturally relevant teaching practices, but it is a more focused literacy approach. It has great importance for students because it gives them voice and choice in the classroom, two essential aspects of culturally relevant teaching. In addition, allowing students to have the power and agency to ask questions and to be partners in their own education is an essential component of critical literacy in schools. Providing students a critical framework as well as diverse materials is indispensable for students and teachers striving for culturally relevant and critical literacy environments in their classrooms.

Critical literacy defined. The history of critical literacy is deeply rooted in discovering truth and multiple perspectives. “The term critical has a distinctive etymology. It is derived from the Greek adjective *kriticos*, the ability to argue and judge.” (Luke, 2012, p. 5) While working and living in marginalized indigenous and

peasant communities in Brazil, Paulo Freire's (1970) approach was grounded in Marxist and phenomenological philosophies. He thought that school was similar to a banking system and was aligned to social class. He advocated for a "dialogical approach to literacy based on principles of reciprocal exchange. These would critique and transform binary relationships of oppressed and oppressor, teacher and learner" (Luke, 2012 p. 5). Freire advocated for students to find their voice and have the tools to have agency for their own lives. "Reading the word," then, entails "reading the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987), unpacking myths and distortions, and building new ways of knowing and acting upon the world. Technical mastery of written language, then, is a means to broader human agency and individual collective action--not an end in itself" (Luke, 2012, p. 5-6).

While Freire's (1970) work certainly has set the stage for critical literacy today, there are many antecedents to his work. Early 20th century examples of working class and African American community education were noted in Voloshinov's (1929/1986) analysis of speech genres as well as postwar British cultural studies by Richard Hoggart (1957) and Raymond Williams (1977) which set the stage for critical literacy: (a) the expansion of education beyond canonical and literary texts to include works of popular culture; (b) a focus on critical analysis as counter-hegemonic critique that might, in turn, (c) encourage recognition of marginalized communities' histories and experiences (Luke, 2012, p. 6).

Freire's work was thought to be mainly binary in its focus (e.g. oppressor/oppressed) and some researchers in later years expanded on this thinking. "A central tenet of Foucault's (1972) analysis of discourse was that binary opposition had the

potential to obscure the complexity of discourse (Luke, 2012, p. 6). In later years, reading researchers looked at critical literacy as a tenant of comprehension. “These versions of critical reading define literacy as an internal knowledge or schemata” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; as cited in Luke, 2012, p. 6) Freire’s critical literacy was focused on creating agency for oppressed readers and citizens. This later research focuses more on multiple ways to interact with text. “Literacy is affiliated with the developmental acquisition of complex forms of reasoning and cognitive processes (e.g., taxonomy, categorization) and growth from narrative to expository genres” (Olson, 1996).

Luke points out that schools teach critical reading “as a reasoned approach to identifying author bias; approaches to comprehension focus on the multiple possible meanings derived from the interaction of background knowledge and textual message” (Luke, 2012, p. 6). More recent critical literacy models make the assumption that “literary texts produce diverse meanings, depending upon readers’ affective responses. In more general terms, literature becomes a means for the moral and intellectual construction of the self” (Luke, 2012, p. 6-7). Scholars see this shift from Freire’s work to what they describe as a model of literacy that is a “cognitive process, as textual analysis, and as a personal response feature in school curricula” (Luke, 2012, p. 7). Researchers look at this shift as a “reshaping of political consciousness, material conditions, and social relations as first principles. They also differ in their understanding of the relative agency and power of readers and writers, texts and language” (Luke, 2012, p. 7).

American approaches to critical literacy have developed a strong focus on the politics of voice, on engaging with the histories, identities, and struggles faced by groups marginalized on the basis of difference of gender, language, culture and race, and sexual orientation (e.g. Kumishiro & Ngo, 2007). A critical approach to language and literacy education requires an explicit engagement with cultural and linguistic diversity (Luke, 2012, p. 7-8).

Luke (2000) analyzes critical literacy and looks at its initial roots in Pablo Freire's research base:

Critical literacy is based on Freire's work, his "initial claim is that all reading is transitive--that by definition one reads and writes something....But Freire upped the ante by arguing that in reading any particular text one must by definition engage with "reading the world" (Freire and Macedo, 1987; as cited in Luke, 2000, p. 451).

The notion of reading the world is a social way of looking at literacy. Inclusion in literacy practices means that students are exposed to text from multiple points of view. Students may not be able to physically visit all over the world, but they can read about different perspectives from around the world.

The aim of critical literacy is a classroom environment where students and teachers together work to (a) see how the worlds of texts work to construct their worlds, their cultures, and their identities in powerful, often overtly ideological ways; and (b) use texts as social tools in ways that allow for a reconstruction of these same worlds (Luke, 2000, p. 453).

Critical literacy as a framework. Janks (2000) argued that there are four orientations to critical literacy education, each based on a different view of the relationship between language and power. She shares that educators work from a *domination perspective*, which means considering how language and signs maintain positions of social and political domination. Another perspective is an *access perspective* which is an attempt to provide access to dominant forms of language without compromising the integrity of nondominant forms. A *diversity perspective* requires attention to the way that uses of language create social identities. Finally a *design perspective* emphasizes the need to use and select from a range of available semiotic signs. Janks describes these orientations as interdependent and a range of which must be weaved together into “complex moves” to balance one another (Behrman, 2006, p. 491).

Complex moves is the hallmark of teaching, and with critical literacy it is essential for students to have some freedom and the opportunity to have voice and an opportunity to share their ideas and opinions. “The multiplicity of conceptual positions that influence critical literacy and the resistance to a definitive critical literacy pedagogy place responsibility for curriculum development on teachers and teacher educators amid ‘the flux and flow of real-world obstacles and pressures’” (Corson, 2002: as cited in Behrman, 2006, p. 491). Researchers also point to offering multiple and supplementary texts for students in order to give them ways to experience critical literacy.

This research organizes classroom practices into six broad categories based on student activities or tasks:

1. Reading supplementary texts,
2. Reading multiple texts,
3. Reading from a resistant perspective,
4. Producing counter-texts,
5. Conducting student-choice research projects, and
6. Taking social action (Behrman, 2006, p. 492).

Reading diverse and multiple texts can be an entry point into critical literacy practices. Students who hear multiple versions of fairy tales for example can analyze the different versions and look at the text from different character perspectives. For example, there are over one hundred different versions of Cinderella. Students can read different cultural perspectives, as well as from different character perspectives in this classic tale. As Behrman stated in 2006:

Reading multiple texts encourages students to understand authorship as a situated activity. Students can consider who constructed the text, when, where, why, and the values on which it was based. By experiencing different treatments of the same topic or event, students begin to recognize that text is not “true” in any absolute sense but a rendering as portrayed by an author (p. 483).

Another way that critical literacy can help students see things in a different way is to look at alternative narratives. “A text may be interpreted from various positions, including the invited, author-centered view and the resistant world-centered view” (Alford, 2001; as cited in Behrman, 2006, p. 493). Students can look at a text from multiple angles and analyze different identities based on race, ethnicity, class, gender,

language, sexuality and religion. By pulling apart a text students and their teachers can bring out relevant themes and topics that are important to students. One example of this was “found in a unit on Wisconsin state history. The teacher organized students into small groups that took on a family identity (e.g. Native American, German American, English American) and then expressed their family’s views as Wisconsin evolved from part of the Northwest Territory to a separate territory and then to a statehood” (McCall, 2002; as cited in Behrman, 2006, p. 492). Allowing students to experience different points of view builds empathy and understanding of multiple cultural perspectives. Another example of this is using the Tall Tale Paul Bunyon and the Blue Ox. This story is about Paul Bunyon, a lumberjack, who is a mythical hero of the lumber camps in the United States. Students can all take on different perspectives (e.g. trees, lumberjacks, Native Americans, environment, etc). Students can listen to this Tall Tale and then debate from their different perspectives. “A resistant perspective can also be motivated by inviting students to read from an alternative frame of reference” (Lien, 2003; as cited in Behrman, 2006, p. 493).

Another way to create diverse texts is to have students engage in writing their own texts and stories. For example, Behrman (2006) shares, “a countercontext or counternarrative is a student-created text that presents a topic from a non mainstream perspective” (p. 494).

Researchers also provide additional ideas for using critical literacy to create student choice research projects. Behrman (2006) suggests that a “student-choice research project is envisioned as a way to lessen the space between school-sanctioned

topics and those usually considered “kid’s business” (Fairbanks, 2000). In order for critical literacy to be a part of student projects, it can’t be just self-selected research projects; students must move towards social justice. “In order to employ their literacy skills to challenge power structures, students can engage in social action projects aimed at making a real difference in their or others’ lives” (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). Students must be involved in projects in their communities that are authentic and relevant to their own lives. As Behrman (2006) shares, “student-choice research projects move important real-life issues into the school setting. An outcome of social action is to move students’ real-life concerns beyond classroom walls. Taking social action requires students to become involved as members of a larger community” (p. 495).

Literature shows that social justice and critical literacy cannot just be isolated projects, rather it’s a way of thinking and teaching. “If social justice and democracy are indeed goals of critical literacy, then we might expect not only classroom practices but also classroom structures to reflect these goals” (Behrman, 2006, p. 496). This type of teaching requires a shift from hierarchical teaching to a co-constructed classroom environment where both students and teachers create the agenda to learn from one another. I will explore these two topics in more depth later in this literature review. “Morgan (1997) appears to be a hallmark of critical literacy instruction. Teachers and teacher educators must confront the question of whether any pedagogy that presumes a hierarchical relationship between teacher and students truly supports the development of critical inquiry” (Behrman, 2006, p. 496).

Some researchers have also asked the question of whether or not critical literacy can move beyond language arts and social studies. For example, is there room for critical literacy in science, mathematics, arts and other subject areas? Behrman (2006) raises the following questions:

- How does specific text gain acceptance and prominence?
- What counts as “true” within the discipline, and who makes that determination? Why?
- How do particular text genres gain acceptance and prominence?
- What are considered “legitimate” modes of inquiry within the discipline?
- How do the content, genres, and modes of inquiry within a discipline affect the social relations of participants in the disciplinary community?

It is these questions that future researchers and educators will have to consider moving forward if we are to move towards critical literacy in education on a broader scale. One question that I have asked myself as a researcher, is why hasn't critical literacy become the “norm” in the past twenty-five years?

Critical literacy in the classroom. As educators look at critical literacy as a curricular tool, many teachers use it as a literacy tool. Some researchers see this as a tool that can be better used in social studies settings. “The term critical literacy describes a pedagogical approach to reading that focuses on the political, sociocultural, historical, and economic forces that shape young student’s lives. It is an approach that teaches readers to become critically conscious of their own values and responsibilities in society” (Ciardiello, 2004 as cited in Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 487). Based on this

background, Ciardiello's (2004) five theme instructional model can be used to frame a social studies setting.

Theme One: Examining Multiple Perspectives Students must do more than just ask critical questions. "In addition, social studies teachers need to teach their students to search for those voices missing or silenced in texts and bring them to the forefront of the classroom to agree with or reject the author's point of view (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010).

Theme Two: Find Authentic Voice Using critical literacy in social studies and literature encourages students to look for and express their own authentic voice. "Critical literacy allows young social scientists to critically examine their social studies text to understand how the language of power benefits dominant voices (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 489). This is also a challenge for students who may have marginalized voices based on their race, class, sexual orientation, and other defining characteristics. The gist of this work is based on creating a classroom culture where students have safe places to have classroom discussions. "As Simon (1987) articulated, "An education that creates silence is not an education" (p. 370); therefore, it is crucial that students be given opportunities to discuss, debate, and rewrite cultural narratives using their unique voices while becoming critically literate. (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010).

Theme Three: Recognize Social Barriers and Cross Borders of Separation Classrooms can have internal barriers and have become more diverse. Schools and classrooms are challenged by "issues created by race, poverty, gender equity, and religious or ethnic injustices" (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 490). Teachers are challenged to create safe spaces where students feel their voices can be heard and accepted. "An important first

step we take is to teach our students how harmful assumptions can lead to stereotypes and unfair judgments about individuals and groups and thus to the establishment of social barriers” (p. 490). Their own identity is seen in texts and through discussion with peers. “The social studies classroom is the perfect forum for students to find their true identity, because it fosters a climate where students can open their minds, think creatively, and be open to the possibility of social healing” (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 490). It’s important to foster students’ understanding of self-identity because these harmful assumptions can lead to stereotypes and unfair judgments about individuals and groups and thus to the establishment of social barriers” (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 490). Critical literacy is an opportunity for students to recognize social barriers and to reach beyond their own cultural identities.

Theme Four: Find One’s Identity Ciardiello’s (2004) fourth theme of an instructional model for critical literacy is the concept of identity. Gee (2001) informed us that “the concept of identity is situated within a context, and therefore, it is important in the context of a democratic classroom that students learn how prejudice and discrimination create feelings of low self-worth and negative self-images.” (Gee, 2001 as cited in Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 491). Students are able to examine and help them interact with the world moving forward.

Theme Five: The Call to Service The last theme in Ciardiello’s (2004) instructional model for critical literacy is “the call that strengthens democracy through civic education, service learning, and democracy-minded pedagogies” (Ciardiello, 2004; as cited by Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 492). This is a social justice aspect of education in which

students are encouraged to take action about issues in their communities and the world that are important to them. “The underlying assumption is that elementary-age students can become “democratic agents of civic competence” (Ciardiello, 2004, p. 146) by connecting historical and social injustices of the past to their present world using critical literacy practices” (Bell Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 496).

By allowing students to have a collaborative environment, students have the opportunity to learn from one another, the text and their teacher as a coach or guide on the side. This is the power and the purpose behind critical literacy as a tool for learning and for life. Freebody and Luke (1990) developed a four tiered approach to early reading instruction that has now been widely adopted across Australian schools. This model has been updated:

Coding practices: Developing resources as a code breaker--How do I crack this text? How does it work? What are its patterns and conventions? How do the sounds and the marks relate, singly and in combinations?

Text-meaning practices: Developing resources as a text participant--How do the ideas represented in the text string together? What cultural resources can be brought to bear on the text? What are the cultural meanings and the possible readings that can be constructed from this text?

Pragmatic practices: Developing resources as text user--How do the uses of this text shape its composition? What do I do with this text, here and now? What will others do with it? What are my options and alternatives?

Critical practices: Developing resources as text analyst and critic--What kind of person, with what interests and values, could both write and read this naively and unproblematically? What is this text trying to do to me? In whose interests? Which positions, voices, and interests are at play? Which are silent and absent? (Luke, 2000, p. 454). This is a model to use for critical literacy, but it is not hierarchical in nature, it's a model in which teachers can use strategies flexibly. It's a multi-dimensional approach to literacy instruction. "At the same time, the model provides a useful template for weighing up and questioning the emphases of current classroom literacy programs" (Luke, 2000, p. 454).

As critical literacy is embedded in schools, this work can be done with students in early elementary school as well as middle, high school and college level classrooms. Comber shows us that critical literacy does not have to be dry or dull. Apol (1998) suggests some questions that can be used with young children:

- Questions about how characters and situations are portrayed: "Who do you like in the story?" "Who is always in the background in this story?" or "Which people don't you hear in the story, and what might they say if you heard them?"
- Questions about how information is presented: "Are there other ways to show this person/place/event?"
- Questions about how texts are probably intended to be read: "What do you think the writer wants readers to think?"

- Questions about how they as readers respond to the text: “What did you notice about this story?” or “How does this make you feel?”

Additionally, Kohl (1995) offered some questions in his discussion of the Babar series (p. 5). These questions can be modified and applied to many different children’s texts: “Who has the power in Babar?”

- “Who makes the decisions in the story?”
- “Who is obeyed and tells the other characters what to do?”
- “How is power distributed among the characters in the text?” (Kohl, 1995; as cited in McDaniel, 2004, p. 477).

Delpitt (2012), a leader in the field, has written about bringing critical thinking into teaching. She was questioned about her premise that basic skills need to be taught, but not at the expense of critical thinking and questioning text. Based on an interview with Dana Goldstein in 2012 she stated:

One cannot divorce the teaching of basic skills from the demands of critical thinking; having kids question what is in newspaper articles, even question what is in textbooks. One of the things I talk about in *Multiplication* is that I once visited with some students who were at an Afrocentric school. I asked them what the difference was between their school and regular public schools. These middle-schoolers told me they couldn’t just accept what was in books, they could argue any point if they gave sufficient and clear arguments supporting their position. That, I believe, is what we need to aim for, that children bring their

minds to school and not just their ability to regurgitate facts (*An Interview With Lisa Delpit on Educating 'Other People's Children' pages 1-3*).

Allowing students to have the power and agency to ask questions and to be partners in their own education is an essential component of critical literacy in schools. In addition to giving students a critical framework, providing diverse materials is indispensable for students and teachers striving for culturally relevant and critical literacy environments in their classrooms.

Sleeter (2008) writes about the importance of involving students in selecting reading materials. She shares the importance of including multiple perspectives: “A conceptualization of curriculum as offering students both ‘windows’ and ‘mirrors’, written by researcher Style (1996) provides a helpful framework for selecting curricular materials in a way that both acknowledges what experiences students bring and stretches them beyond their own viewpoints” (p. 150). The notion that it is important for students to gain a “window” into another culture while having the important opportunity to see themselves in a “mirror” within texts and the curriculum is essential to this philosophy.

Additionally, there are many ways to look at critical literacy and how to interact with texts in school settings. In working with teachers and educators, it’s important to have multiple entry points for discussion protocols. The research points to many ways of introducing and sustaining critical literacy. It’s important to note that adults and educators are best able to sustain this work if they can have their own personality infused in the work. “Generating and testing possible theories is an important part of critical

literacy” (Labadie, Mosley Wetzel & Rogers, 2012). Here are some additional ways to introduce critical literacy:

Critical literacy practices include ways of interacting with texts that are powerful for the reader (Hall & Piazza, 2008; Heffernan & Lewison, 2005; Lazar & Offenber, 2011; Mosley, 2009).

Lewison et al. (2008) defined four dimensions of critical literacy:

1. Disrupting the commonplace — Asking what is naturalized or taken for granted in a text, uncovering perhaps the way a text constructs a possibility for a reader (i.e., what activities or emotions are appropriate for girls or boys).
2. Interrogating multiple viewpoints—Recognizing diverse personal and cultural perspectives on an issue and having dialogue about that diversity.
3. Focusing on the sociopolitical— Addressing social issues related to justice.
4. Taking action and promoting social justice—Moving to action (through talk, letter writing, etc.) based on an inquiry. These active responses to a text develop reflective stances and teach the practices of reading in a community (Lewison et al, 2009 as cited in Johnston, 2004; Luke, 1995).

These practices are ways to draw out critical literacy in classrooms. There are multiple ways to approach critical literacy instruction. As many of the scholars have shared, it’s important to give teachers and schools flexibility in how they approach critical literacy instruction.

“As a theory, critical literacy espouses that education can foster social justice by allowing students to recognize how language is affected by and affects social relations”

(Behrman, 2006, p. 490). This movement towards social justice is what makes critical literacy a fluid framework that must be created in partnership with students. Critical literacy is not a “cookie cutter” approach that can be done in a linear way, rather it must have depth and authenticity created with and by students. “While Luke (2000) recognized varied classroom strategies to foster critical literacy, he cautioned against a “formula for ‘doing’ critical literacy in the classroom” (pp. 453-454) and questioned the value of a state-mandated curriculum policy supporting critical literacy” (Behrman, 2006, p. 490).

Critical literacy and social justice. Research shows that critical literacy and social justice are interconnected in many ways. “Different theories of social justice underpin critical literacy” (Zacher Pandya & Avila, 2014, as cited in Comber, 2015, p. 363). In 2015, Comber states: “My early conception of critical literacy (Comber, 1994) involved the following pedagogical moves”:

- Repositioning students as researchers of language.
- Respecting student resistance and exploring minority culture constructions of literacy.
- Problematizing classroom and public texts (Comber, 2015, 363)

Comber’s (2015) research is informed by Freire, and also Australian sociologist R.W. Connell’s identification of a key principal of social justice as working in the “interests of the least advantaged” (Connell, 1993, p. 43). Comber’s research focuses on areas of poverty and people who are marginalized in dominant culture society. “These stories of communities become ‘texts of terror’ (Rappaport, 2000)--dominant cultural

narratives--which actively reproduce dangerous stereotypes and chains of logic and literally change the ways in which poor youth might be seen by their teachers” (Comber, 2015, p. 365). It is a central goal of critical literacy to give voice and agency to groups of people who may otherwise have “absent narratives” in society. Comber also pleads that curriculum in schools must have a social justice component to combat this repetitive pattern.

Designing curriculum with a social justice agenda requires knowledge about the relationships between people, places, and poverty. This will mean enhancing teacher knowledge of economics, statistics, geography, politics and history.

Future critical literacy practices need to engage teachers and students in investigating relationships between changing phenomena, including money, rather than a static embracing of the old so-called basics and compliance with the status-quo” (Comber, 2015, p. 366).

The literature also argues that students, especially “in the United States are taught to not question the status quo and to accept and obey the voice of authority. Such indoctrination in passivity is compounded by the fact that stories can shape the ways in which children perceive themselves and their world” (Kohl, 1995; McGinley et al., 1997). “Children learn at an early age that certain subjects, such as sex or homelessness, are uncomfortable for adults and therefore are off-limits” (McDaniel, C. 2004, p. 473). Many researchers have argued that relevant topics that are close to students’ lives are of interest and can and should be examined. “They argued that the “closer to students’ lives, the more meaningful, the more likely the topic is to be taboo” (Kohl, 1995; McGinley et al., 1997,

p. 221). Hence, ideas that adults deem disturbing or forbidden are typically avoided, despite children's possible desire to learn more about them" (McDaniel, C. 2004, p. 473).

Critical literacy is centered around Paulo Freire's work which calls for a "radical change" in education. He believed that it is important to give students voice and agency to change the social structures in our society.

In the seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), Freire explained that exploited people do not necessarily recognize their own oppression. He wrote, "as long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically, 'accept' their exploitation" (p. 64). Additionally, the oppressed "prefer the security of conformity with their state of unfreedom to the creative communion produced by freedom and even the very pursuit of freedom" (p. 48). (McDaniel, 2004, p. 474).

Freire and other advocates of critical literacy support a shift in education, in which students are given the opportunity to be at the center of the curriculum. In this model teachers would facilitate discussion and questioning, in which students are the focus of learning, versus being passive in the learning process. Current researchers place critical literacy on the continuum of culturally relevant teaching practices.

Regarding empowerment, Freire would argue that it does not come *from* the educator *to* the student, or *from* the adult *to* the child. Rather, the educator or adult provides the skills that will hopefully lead to the development of a sense of agency, self-sufficiency, not just confined to the written word in a book or magazine; it could be a t-shirt, graffiti, a cereal box, and other ways to read the

world. Freire believed that a person could be transformed to read them and confident decision making decisions (McDaniel, 2004, p. 474).

There are many ways to define critical literacy, Shannon (1995) offered a concise, understandable explanation.

Critical perspectives push the definition of literacy beyond traditional decoding and encoding of words in order to reproduce the meaning of text or society until it becomes a means for understanding one's own history and culture, to recognize connections between one's life and the social structure, to believe that change in one's life, and the lives of others and society are possible as well as desirable, and to act on this new knowledge in order to foster equal and just participation in all the decisions that affect and control our lives (p. 83) (McDaniel, 2004, p. 474).

In addition to the way students read, critical literacy pushes on the notion of text. Text is the world interacting with readers. Readers are asked to question the world around them and the texts with which they are presented. Students are asked questions such as, "Why are things the way they are?" and "Who benefits from the status quo?" Furthermore, it is important to recognize that critical thinking skills are only a component of critical literacy--readers are encouraged to uncover implicit messages in texts and to examine all aspects of discourse" (McDaniel, 2004, p. 474).

It's not just enough to build this framework into literature discussions, whole class discussion and guided reading; rather, critical literacy is a social justice mindset that alters a classroom and students experience. The notion is that students will be able to examine issues that are important and relevant to them.

Critical literacy has roots in social justice pedagogy. Critical literacy offers an avenue for examining social justice issues in various forms of text and media (Leland, 2005) and does so “by reading text critically to see how they have been constructed, whose interests are served, and how they work to produce our identities” (Janks, 2014, p. 355). Classroom dialogue revolves around relevant social issues as children learn to question, analyze, deconstruct, and an inquiry-based frame has begun to shape in scholarship that focuses on the early years and elementary level. For instance, aspects of historical inquiry, including identification, attribution, judging perspective, and reliability assessment (James & McVay, 2009) allows students to engage with text critically and make sense of historical documents (Y. Cleovoulou, P. Beach / *Teaching and Teacher Education* 83 (2019) 188-198).

By engaging in this type of shift in instruction, classrooms and schools can move away from surface-level “heroes and holidays” cultural nods, moving into a social justice in-depth way of teaching and learning. Banks (1989) wrote about levels of engagement. He broke down levels of engagement in multicultural teaching approaches into four levels; a contributions approach, the ethnic additive approach, transformation approach and finally a social action approach.

The Contributions Approach to integration is one of the most frequently used and is often used extensively during the first phase of an ethnic revival movement. This approach is characterized by the addition of ethnic heroes into the curriculum that are selected using

criteria similar to those used to select mainstream heroes for inclusion into the curriculum.

The Ethnic Additive Approach allows the teacher to put ethnic content into the curriculum without restructuring it, which takes substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals.

The Transformation Approach differs fundamentally from the Contributions and Additive Approaches. This approach changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view.

The Decision Making and Social Action Approach: This approach includes all of the elements of the Transformation Approach but adds components that require students to make decisions and to take actions related to the concept, issue, or problem they have studied in the unit. In this approach, students study a social problem such as, "What actions should we take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our school?"

(Banks, J. 1989, pp. 17-18).

Banks' 1989 Levels of Contributions is a seminal piece of research related to culturally relevant teaching as a framework and its impact on critical literacy. It names the different levels that align to many individual and school racial equity journeys. "It is not realistic to expect a teacher to move directly from a highly Mainstream-Centric curriculum to one that focuses on decision making and social action. Rather, the move from the first to the higher levels of ethnic content integration into the curriculum is likely to be gradual and cumulative"

Table 2.8 Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content

			Level 4: The Social Action Approach
		Level 3: The Transformation Approach	
	Level 2: The Additive Approach		
Level 1: The Contributions Approach			

(Adapted from Banks, 1989, p. 19)

The levels move from an entry point of inclusion and a beginning understanding of multiple perspectives all the way to a social justice approach, allowing students, teachers and classrooms to make a difference in their community about a social justice issue that is authentic and relevant to their own experiences. It is this transformative and action oriented approach that makes this framework real and relevant for today and moving into the future.

Critiques and issues with critical literacy. One way that critical literacy has been critiqued is in the way that it does not focus on multiple genres. Critics argue that students should be exposed to multiple genres to help them expand their range in reading and literacy education.

Equitable access to how texts work, they argued, is an essential step in redistributive social justice, and cannot be achieved through a principal focus on student voice or ideology critique. The affiliated approach to critical literacy, then, argues for explicit instruction and direct access to “genres of power” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1996, as cited in Luke, 2012, p. 8).

Allowing students to have access to multiple genres also supports Freire’s initial focus on student agency and voice. By allowing students access to a variety of genres, teachers can guide them to find and utilize texts that they will interact with in both academic and “real world” applications. As researchers are grappling with the evolution of critical literacy, the need for this type of work continues to be relevant. As Luke (2012) argues:

Critical literacies are, by definition, historical works in progress. There is not a correct or universal model. Critical literacy entails a process of naming and renaming the world, seeing its patterns, designs, and complexities, and developing the capacity to redesign and reshape it (New London Group, 1996). How educators shape and deploy the tools, attitudes, and philosophies of critical literacy is utterly contingent: It depends upon students’ and teachers’ everyday relations of power, their lived problems and struggles, and as this article here demonstrates, on educators’ professional ingenuity in navigating the enabling or disabling local contexts of policy (Luke, 2000, p. 9).

In 2000 Luke and Marcuse raised another concern regarding creating a systemic approach for critical literacy is that it may “water down it’s potential for consequential

social analysis and action” (Luke, 2000, p. 457). One of the questions raised about critical literacy as a systematic method of teaching in Australia is focused on how much it has actually impacted students. “However, the larger and more persistent question for critical educators, and for governments committed to equity, is whether any of these classroom and curricular differences are making a difference in the life pathways of students and, indeed, whether those students marginalised by traditional approaches to literacy are any better off (Freebody, et al, 1997; Comber, Hill, Loudon, Rivillard, & Reid, 1998; as cited by Luke, 2000, p. 457).

Having the opportunity to ask questions and build critical literacy into the mainstream curriculum is the hope, but also potentially the fear. Luke (2000) suggested that a mainstream critical literacy framework could become “just a watered down version of educational progressivism” (p. 449) rather than true critical literacy, mainly because it has become institutionalized. More importantly, the transformational component is lacking, and Morgan asserted that “It would be naive to expect that the state would endorse a pedagogy which proclaims its intention to undermine the economic status quo and the legitimacy of the present practice of government” (Morgan, 1997, p. 24 as cited in McDaniel, 2004, p. 475).

In moving from theory to practice, Giroux (1993) explained that critical literacy: Points to pedagogical practices which offer students the knowledge, skills, and values they will need to critically negotiate and transform the world in which they find themselves. The politics of critical literacy and cultural difference engages

rather than retreats from those problems that make democracy messy, vibrant, and noisy (Giroux, 1993, p. 376, as cited in McDaniel, 2004, p. 475).

Moving towards this messy democracy in the classroom requires a shift in belief to move into this work in an authentic way. McDaniel (2004) warns, “teachers need to be honest with themselves and realize that an approach to critical literacy will be inauthentic, and thereby futile if they do not truly embrace its philosophical underpinnings” (McDaniel, 2004, p. 475). This means that teachers need to be willing to be vulnerable, make some mistakes and trust that by listening to their students and their opinions and insights is just as important as the lesson plan they prepared. It’s this type of open-minded flexibility that is required to truly implement both culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy instruction. This also includes looking at texts critically as adults. Apol (1998) explained:

The starting point for helping students to be critical readers is for teachers themselves to be critical readers, able to immerse themselves in the experience of literature while at the same time distancing themselves in order to recognize and evaluate the values and hidden messages implicit in the text (Apol, 1998, p. 36-37, as cited by McDaniel, 2004, p. 475).

Researchers, including Apol (1998) advocate for a “tricky balance between theory and practice” (p. 32), to integrate the content and methods of English departments with the concepts and strategies of colleges in education. Teacher education needs to embrace critical literacy concepts if we are going to see a shift in future teachers entering the workforce. Literary theory, which Apol defined as a questioning critical stance, can help

readers (of all ages) to determine the ideology--the cultural assumptions and unexamined messages--contained in a text.” (McDaniel, 2004, p. 475-476). It is this balance that makes critical literacy an important goal, and a challenging one for schools and districts to embrace. As we will see later in this literature review, it’s also a matter of finding time and interest in professional development to support teachers in embracing new learnings and ideologies.

Challenges implementing critical literacy. Critical literacy is not a new way of thinking, and was actually first shared by Pablo Freire in the late 1970s. From a social justice standpoint, it may cause one to wonder if there are systemic racism underpinnings that have held this way of teaching and thinking back. Many have argued that the education system in the United States was created with white-dominant male culture at the center. In Australia, critical literacy has become a much more widely used curriculum and pedagogy throughout their schools. However, researcher Allan Luke (2000) warns that he does not advocate for a national critical literacy curriculum. He states:

Some cautionary advice about the lineage...it is distinctively Australian, a broad outline of the moves to develop critical literacy as an educational project over the past 15 years. Many of us learned a costly lesson from the centre/margin relationships of international educational research: It is dangerous to generalize any educational approach from one national/regional and cultural context to another. So I’m not proposing the extension of what we’ve done in Australia to other national, regional or local school systems (Luke, 2000, p. 449).

In another analysis of using critical literacy in mainstream classrooms and curricula, Pandya (2012), discusses some of the downfalls of using critical literacy in a mandated curriculum. She describes the “Inquiry” component in a reading curriculum. Within this curriculum there are two different types of formats included that are supposed to lead to an inquiry model. The first is supposed to provide “genuine research,” and teachers are required to guide their students through a research cycle of six steps:

1. Decide on a problem or question to research.
2. Formulate an idea or conjecture about the research problem.
3. Identify needs and make plans.
4. Reevaluate the problem or question based on what we have learned so far and the feedback we have received.
5. Revise the idea or conjecture.
6. Identify new needs and make new plans. (SRA/McGraw-Hill, 2002, p. 38)

What Pandya (2012) found in her research was that schools who work with a literacy coach modified the six steps and made a portable poster of “inquiry directions” that they used when teaching inquiry classes:

1. Ask questions
2. Make conjectures
3. Needs and plans
4. Investigate (also called “research”)
5. Revise conjectures
6. Present information

Table 2.9: Research Cycle Compared

Step 1	Decide on a problem or question to research	Ask questions
Step 2	Formulate an idea or conjecture about the research problem.	Make conjectures
Step 3	Identify needs and make plans.	Needs and plans
Step 4	Reevaluate the problem or question based on what we have learned so far and the feedback we have received.	Investigate (also called “research”)
Step 5	Revise the idea or conjecture.	Revise conjectures
Step 6	Identify new needs and make new plans.	Present information

Within her research, Pandya (2012), found that teachers were modifying the inquiry process and this was having an impact on the depth of the questions and the level of critical literacy or inquiry that students were experiencing. Pandya (2012), states: “The pressure to conform to the cycle, and to push students to do the same, drained the process of any potential for the development of critical literacy skills, as the teacher, and the students, were more interested in following directions than they were in asking questions of and about texts” (Pandya, 2012, p. 24).

The notion of having a mandated “script” found in a curriculum makes authentic critical literacy a challenge. As Pandya, 2012 notes:

Finally, teachers will need to decide that they are able to facilitate critical literacy and inquiry processes as capable, interested, and constantly growing adult learners alongside their constantly growing and learning students. Meaningful, authentic inquiry can begin when teachers grant themselves and students freedom to think and learn together (p. 25).

In looking at this section of the literature review, the question is focused on teaching structures. It goes back to the idea that learning should be reciprocal and the teacher and students can learn alongside one another.

Critical literacy's impact on students. Does critical literacy have a positive impact on students' lives? What must happen to implement critical literacy in classrooms? As Luke explains, "It is also about envisioning how students might be active, powerful, and critical users of texts and discourses in text-based economies that are, for much of the population, not only increasingly risky and uncertain, but also complex and fraught with new kinds of difference" (Luke, 2000, p. 450).

Asking the question of how we can move towards a meaningful and authentic process for embarking on critical literacy, the question may be more about removing barriers. As Luke stated in 2000, "Perhaps it is not a question of whether and how government might bring "critical literacy" under an umbrella of state curriculum policy, but rather a matter of government getting out of the way so that "critical literacies" can be invented in classrooms. Perhaps it is absence and silence from the centre that enables" (Luke, 2000, 459).

Critical literacy is being experienced by students and instructors in multiple ways. Online literacy instruction and personal use are prevalent in the 21st century. As we speak, there are new ways to encounter text via the internet, Smartphones and so many other online devices. This makes the case for critical literacy practices being even more relevant. “Critical literacy is a sociocultural practice that should engage learners in dialogue and collaboration (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Riley, 2015 as cited in Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 283).

In both online and other ways to encounter text, using the analogy of different lenses is helpful:

Though critical literacy can take different forms, we describe it here as a questioning stance that readers assume when engaged in a text. Jones (2006) likened a critical literacy stance to “a pair of eyeglasses that allows one to see beyond the familiar and comfortable. When readers wear critical literacy “eyeglasses,” they look beyond a text’s face value and question it’s purpose and implicit meanings (Jones, 2006 as cited in Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 284).

By using a different set of lenses, it’s important for readers to have a critical questioning stance, asking questions of themselves and others such as, who has the power in this text, whose voice is heard, or left out, who benefits and who suffers. It’s this type of questioning that will ultimately support a disruption and dismantling of systemic racism in schools and our society.

One study “examines the critical literacy performances of students in an online, asynchronous, graduate-level children’s literature course. In the course students

performed critical literacy in four ways: 1. They unpacked the social identities and norms evident in the books, 2. Considered characters and events from multiple viewpoints, 3. Interrogated issues of power, authority and agency and, 4. Analyzed the historical, cultural and sociopolitical contexts of the books” (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 287).

Through Forest & Kimmel’s 2016 study, four dimensions were themes in the research:

Disrupting the commonplace, or asking questions of texts, considering how language is normative, and analyzing portrayals of people in media.

Interrogating multiple views, or considering multiple perspectives in texts, noticing who is privileged and marginalized, and critiquing and reconstructing dominant discourses.

Focusing on sociopolitical issues, or interrogating the power of dominant groups, viewing literacy as a way of participating in the political process, and using literacy for political goals.

Taking action and promoting social justice, or using literacy to create a more equitable world (Lewison et al., 2002, pp. 382-384)

By using this approach, the researchers were able to examine students' input and look for themes. One of the themes that arose was related to social norms. “In their discussions, students addressed social identities like gender, social class, and race and discussed norms, expectations and stereotypes associated with these identities” (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 288). By examining social norms and stereotypes, using critical literacy questions is helpful in providing students a platform to form their discussion. “When students interrogated the books from multiple perspectives, they considered

characters and events from several viewpoints" (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 289). Being aware of multiple perspectives gives the reader a wider net in which to observe and interact with text. "In recognizing that people are multi-dimensional, the students also realized that books make it possible to alter perspectives about people" (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 290).

This study also brought up the theme of interrogating power relationships and agency. "Students exercise agency by challenging and questioning the authors of the books. They also examined issues of power within the books, including how power is advanced or constrained by social identities and cultural expectations" (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 290). Students looked into power and social identities and norms and unpacked how these played out in books. "Students talked about the pressure of social norms and interrogated relationships of power to gender and class identities" (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 291).

Analyzing historical, economic, social and political contexts were also a key theme in this study. "Within this theme, students made connections between the books and U. S. society past and present. At times, students considered the books through a historical lens, evaluating characters and events from the perspective of a particular time period" (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 291). This study felt confident that an online platform can be beneficial in using critical literacy strategies to bring issues to the surface and analyze them.

These performances are consistent with the perspective of critical literacy that we have elucidated; they are also consistent with Gee's (1996) belief that literacy entails going beyond a text's literal meaning and reading its implicit meanings and values. We conclude that online discussions of children's literature can be vehicles for promoting and developing a critical literacy stance (Forest & Kimmel, 2016, p. 292).

Forest and Kimmel share an example of ways to model a book introduction using critical literacy questions. Teachers and professional development facilitators could use this as a model in their own planning for books.

Prompts for Analyzing Images During Book Introductions

1. Look at the illustrations of characters that highlight emotion
 - "How is s/he feeling right now?"
 - "Can you show me that emotion using your facial expression?"
2. Examine how the illustrator depicts the characters and setting
 - What do the illustrations tell you about the characters/setting in the book?
 - How are the characters/setting represented in the illustrations and how does it make you feel?
3. Explore multiple perspectives
 - Whose point of view does the illustration show?
 - Which characters/scenes are in the illustrations? Who or what is left out?
 - How might the illustrator have depicted this scene differently?
4. Examine the illustrator's techniques

- How does the illustrator use lines, shapes, colors, and textures in the illustration? What mood do these elements create in the illustration?
- What seems most important in the illustration, and how does the illustrator show importance (Labadie, Mosley Wetzel & Rogers, 2012, *The Reading Teacher*).

Critical literacy is also viewed as looking at texts and curriculum from multiple perspectives. These authors encourage educators to use an inquiry method to promote student thinking and authentic voice. “These principles contribute to the literature on critical literacy inquiry by naming and framing common elements of practice and sharing how they work together.” They are listed as follows:

- Encouraging student dialogue of critical issues through purposeful text and media selection
- Connecting text and media to students' lives through ongoing reflective practice
- Empowering student voice
- Use of open-ended questions to develop deeper connections
- Sharing multiple perspectives through knowledge building circles
- Use of misconceptions to guide the learning
- Affirming identities and encouraging advocacy

(Y. Cleovoulou, P. Beach / *Teaching and Teacher Education* 83 (2019) 188-198)

It’s not just enough to build this framework into literature discussions, whole class discussion and guided reading; rather, critical literacy is a social justice mindset that

alters a classroom and students experience. The notion is that students will be able to examine issues that are important and relevant to them.

Critical literacy has roots in social justice pedagogy. Critical literacy offers an avenue for examining social justice issues in various forms of text and media (Leland, 2005) and does so “by reading text critically to see how they have been constructed, whose interests are served, and how they work to produce our identities” (Janks, 2014, p. 355). Classroom dialogue revolves around relevant social issues as children learn to question, analyze, deconstruct, and an inquiry-based frame has begun to shape in scholarship that focuses on the early years and elementary level. For instance, aspects of historical inquiry, including identification, attribution, judging perspective, and reliability assessment (James & McVay, 2009) allows students to engage with text critically and make sense of historical documents (Cleovoulou & Beach 2019,188-198).

Making literacy relevant and engaging is the aim of critical literacy. As Luke questions, “It is also about envisioning how students might be active, powerful, and critical users of texts and discourses in text-based economies that are, for much of the population, not only increasingly risky and uncertain, but also complex and fraught with new kinds of difference” (Luke, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43:5, February 2000, p. 450).

Critical literacy evolving. An important consideration for critical literacy is that text is not just books and traditional forms of literature; “text” can be anything that can be “read” or consumed. McDaniel writes that, “essentially, a person can ‘read,’ interpret,

question, and ‘rewrite’ almost any aspect of his or her world.” (McDaniel, 2004) When text is so open, it truly opens up the field of literacy, and specifically critical literacy.

Critical literacy has expanded over the years and has started to include concepts such as critical expressionism. McLaughlin & DeVogd (2019) describe critical expressionism as “the new term for this expanded, more encompassing type of critical response. In critical expressionism, student response takes many forms, including multiple representations of thinking, the arts, and multimodal texts” (p. 588). Moving into the 21st century, this critical expressionism allows students to interact with technology and have more freedom of expression in how they relate to text. “Student examples of critical expressionism include sketching, dramatizing, singing, designing projects, and creating multimodal responses--alone, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole class” (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019, p. 588).

There are many ways that students can interact with text and express themselves: “generating digital images, designing self-authored digital texts, creating comics, engaging in dramatizations, making films (Comber, Woods, & Grant, 2017), and producing podcasts, (Vasquez, 2010) are just a sampling of the possibilities for student engagement” (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019, p. 588). How can teachers facilitate critical literacy and critical expressionism in their classrooms? McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019 point out some key ways that this can be accomplished:

- Teach students to comprehend text.
- Teach students about critical literacy.

- Teach students to explore critical literacy analytic approaches. These include problem-posing questions, juxtaposing texts, and switching.
- Teach students that critical expressionism is a new term for critical response--not designed to replace discussion but rather to supplement and extend understanding.
- Ensure that students understand the multifaceted nature of critical expressionism, including its ability to infuse multiple representations of thinking, integrate the arts, and use multimodal text and technology to communicate ideas.
- Select texts that represent critical literacy.
- Engage students in critical literacy and critical expressionism.
- Join the students to take action and celebrate new understandings!

(McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019, p. 588-589).

In looking at critical literacy from a pragmatic standpoint, it's helpful to address some of the potential challenges or barriers. By acknowledging these potential challenges, teachers and literacy leaders can better support implementation of critical literacy and critical expressionism. McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019 share some of these instructional challenges:

- Teaching students to become critically literate requires time that is typically not allocated in school curricula.
- Teachers may encounter issues concerning the availability of resources that represent critical literacy and/or funds to acquire them.

- Teaching students to become critically literate disrupts the status quo and presents alternative perspectives.
- Teachers and students need to maintain a high level of engagement and reflection when reading and responding from a critical stance (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019, p.589)

While these challenges are real, it's important to name them so that when designing a plan as a classroom, school or district level, teachers and leaders know what they need to address. In examining the literature for critical literacy, it's clear that the benefits outweigh the challenges. Especially if teachers and leaders are interested in disrupting systemic racism and providing students with multiple perspectives. "Teaching students to become critically literate and engage in critical expressionism will require materials, time, motivation, and a knowledge of critical literacy for more in-depth investigation and response, but it will lead to a deeper comprehension of text" (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019, p.589).

Summary

Critical literacy aligns with culturally relevant teaching practices; it offers multiple view-points and has an emphasis on utilizing diverse texts in classrooms. The Critical Literacy Protocol (See Appendix A: Critical Literacy Protocol) is one tool to support teachers in their work. An additional tool is the Pathway to Critical Literacy (Appendix B: Pathway to Critical Literacy) which can be used in planning literacy units or lessons. How we will incorporate critical literacy and culturally relevant teaching

practices is the real question. It will have to be based on a systematic and planned approach to professional development and teacher practices.

My primary research question is: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? My secondary question is What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? These research questions will guide the research design in chapter three and will allow readers to unpack ways to evaluate professional development strategies related to culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter includes a review of the literature based on the selected research design. The rationale for the selection of the design, an explanation of the research process, and a plan for analyzing the data is described. The primary research questions for this project are: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? The second question is: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders?

Qualitative Paradigm

The paradigm for this project is qualitative research. As McMillan and Schumacher (2001) stated, “Qualitative research describes and analyzes people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. The researcher interprets phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 395). In comparison, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also stated, “Quantitative research designs emphasize objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena. As a result, the research designs maximize objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure, and control” (p. 23). The comparison between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms shared by McMillan and Schumacher suggests that this research project is better suited for a qualitative design. This type of research paradigm allows this study to be open to the participants’ specific input and examines their perspectives. Creswell explains, “We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be

explored, this exploration is needed in turn, because of a need to study a group of population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices” (2013, p. 47-48). A qualitative research paradigm requires a nuanced approach to research that would not be easily captured in a quantitative research design. Culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy are complex topics influenced by subjective experiences, interpretations and teacher mindset. It would be extremely difficult to measure this in a quantitative design, therefore qualitative research design aligns with my research questions and research design methodology.

Examining the characteristics of qualitative design by Creswell (2013) also validates the decision to use this as a research paradigm. Creswell examines qualitative research using the following categories. Not all research projects will use all of these characteristics, but they will have many of them:

- Is conducted in a natural setting (the field), a source of data for close interaction
- Relies on the researcher as key instrument in data collection
- Involves using multiple methods
- Involves complex reasoning going between inductive and deductive
- Focuses on participants’ perspectives, their meanings, their multiple subjective views
- Is situated within the context or setting of participants/sites (social/political/historical)
- Involves an emergent and evolving design rather than tightly prefigured

design

- Is reflexive and interpretive (i.e., sensitive to researcher's biographies/social identities)
- Presents a holistic, complex picture (Creswell, 2013, p. 46)

Choosing qualitative design practices is appropriate for this research project, as it examines human interactions and learning practices, which is an adaptive process, not just a technical set of numbers and statistics. It is fitting to look at this data in a holistic and inclusive way. As Stake says:

Humans generally are curious, and researchers have a special compulsion to inquire. To an extent, they are controlled by the rules of funding and their disciplines, but that controls only whether or not they will report their use of qualitative methods--all researchers will use them. There are times when all researchers are going to be interpretive, holistic, naturalistic, and uninterested in cause, and then, by definition, they will be qualitative inquirers (Stake, 1995, p. 46).

In examining the qualitative research characteristics that Creswell shared, my research design will encompass several of Creswell's characteristics. The research questions align with a case study method of research because it is a confined case in which professional development for a specific group of teachers focused on culturally relevant teaching instruction and critical literacy practices was examined. The methodology used in this study included elite interviews, focus groups, and teacher interviews to understand how professional development was impactful for teachers

studying culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy. This design is qualitative, which allows for open answers and insights from participants through surveys, focus groups, interviews and elite interviews.

Qualitative research is the most effective mode of research design for this project. Within qualitative research, case study is the specific research design. The next section will outline why case study is the best method within a qualitative research paradigm.

Case Study Research Design

My research is focused on culturally relevant and critical literacy practices and how this professional development informs teachers' perspectives in planning and teaching their students. When using qualitative research studies, "research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 24). In examining the professional development of culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy practices and its impact on teachers' practice, it was an opportunity to learn from teachers how their instruction changed. Creswell (2008) refers to a case study as "an in-depth" exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (p. 476). The case study design fits this research project because it is focused and specific on the impact of professional development on a school-based group of teachers. "A case study is an in-depth analysis of a single entity. It is a choice of what to investigate, identified as a single case or the case" (Stake, 2008). This research focused on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy professional development. Professional development can lead to a change in practice and their outlook towards planning and execution related to

culturally responsive practices. This applies to a bound case study approach to research. “Being *bounded* means being unique according to place, time, and participant characteristics. Whether we use the term *system*, *event*, or *case*, the emphasis is on a single entity, not on methodology.” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001, p. 344-345). Case study fits this research design because it is specific and bounded by a specific situation. Teachers who attended culturally relevant instruction and critical literacy professional development all taught in the same school district and attended the same professional development sessions. Creswell (2013) stated, “The key here is to define a case that can be bounded or described within certain parameters, such as a specific place and time. Typically, case study researchers study current, real-life cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time. A single case can be selected or multiple cases identified so that they can be compared” (p. 98).

This case study examines the impact of professional development on culturally relevant instruction and critical literacy on teachers’ mindsets and their perceptions. “Defining the boundaries, or specifying the unit of analysis is the key decision point in case study design. According to Patton (1980), identifying the unit of analysis means deciding “what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study” (p. 100).

This research project is time bound and specific to the situation in which the teachers who participated in professional development focused on culturally relevant and critical literacy best practices. Case study as a methodology allows the researcher to gather information from participants based on their experience. It also allows for the

researcher to find out how professional development impacts teachers' outlook and shifts their practice based on culturally relevant and critical literacy research and tools. "Case study researchers use the method of specimens as their primary method to come to know extensively and intensively about the single case" (Stake, 1995, p. 36).

This case study focuses on a specific group of teachers from a midwest public elementary school to find out how the professional development on culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy impacted their outlook and mindset to incorporate these strategies into their instruction. There are eight teachers from a variety of backgrounds that are part of this case study. Their experience ranges from three years experience to twenty years plus experience. "One research methodologist, Philip Runkel (1990), described what researchers do as casting nets and testing specimens. For finding common relationships among cases, we cast nets to catch many cases" (Stake, 1995, p. 236). In this case, I'll be looking for relationships and themes in how teachers learn about culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy and apply it to their planning and instruction.

Data Gathering

Professional development sessions. The setting for professional development took place during the 2019-2020 school year at a PK-5 elementary school in a large urban district in the Midwest. Teachers participated in a series of professional development sessions, mostly in person. The first three to four sessions were focused on implicit bias and a book study based on the book, *Why Are All The Black Children Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by Tatum (2017). Each one of the sessions were an hour in length and

there was follow up team or PLC time for teachers to discuss and utilize the strategies and practices in between sessions. In December and January there were two sessions focused on critical literacy and culturally relevant teaching practices. The two sessions focused on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy are the focus of this project. A link to the powerpoint with learning targets and the Pathway to Critical Literacy can be found in Appendix D: Pathway to Critical Literacy and [Link to Critical Literacy Powerpoint](#).

Teachers were given tools, literature and time to discuss this work with their teams. The professional development goals for the two sessions were:

- I can use critical literacy tools to guide and inform my practice.
- I can reflect on my own perspective and challenge myself to incorporate other perspectives in my teaching.
- I can develop practices that encourage students to critically reflect on literature/text.
- I can reflect on the levels of cultural engagement and can determine if perspectives are deep and authentic.

The professional development occurred over ten months and the goals applied to both of the professional development sessions. There were articles and opportunities for teachers to work with their colleagues in between sessions. This collaboration was not formalized because of existing contract limitations in this school district. Teachers also had opportunities for follow up coaching conversations with the professional development facilitator. The follow up coaching and collaboration was perhaps the

weakest part of this work, due to structural limitations at the school. Meeting times were limited as well as opportunities for formal coaching support. The expectation was that teachers were implementing critical literacy strategies in their classroom and would have opportunities to share with colleagues and reflect on this work with their PLC and/or colleagues. The culmination of this implementation was supposed to be our Family Inclusion day in which their critical literacy work would be shared with families. Teachers had this work ready, but school moved to distance learning in March 2019 due to the COVID 19 global pandemic. This is addressed more in depth in chapter five of this dissertation.

The wrap up session was online (due to COVID 19), and focused on racial unrest happening across the country after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It was focused on equity and the importance of talking about race and equity with students. At the conclusion of this session, there was a post-professional development survey that teachers and staff were asked to complete. This survey data informed the focus group and interview questions.

Post professional development survey. In June 2020, there was a post professional development survey given to all staff who participated in the equity, culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy professional development. This survey had multiple purposes:

1. Provide feedback for August professional development focused on implicit bias and the Rondo Museum.

2. Provide feedback for the culturally relevant and critical literacy professional development.
3. Ask for participants to be a part of focus groups or interviews about culturally relevant and critical literacy.
4. Find out what next steps teachers are interested in related to equity professional development.

As McMillan and Schumacher described in 2006, “Surveys are used to learn about people’s attitudes, beliefs, values, demographics, behavior, opinions, habits, desires, ideas, and other types of information (p. 233). Using this survey information provided a context for the professional development that the teachers experienced and helped to guide the focus group questions. There were thirty-seven staff that responded to the survey. The questions focused on how culturally relevant and critical literacy professional development influenced teacher’s practice and encouraged them to learn more about these topics. There were several staff interested in participating in the focus groups based on this survey information.

Elite interviews. The survey results served as a guide for the elite interviews conducted for this research. Questions for the elite interviews can be found in Appendix A, Questions for Elite Interviews of District Leaders. There were four elite interviews done with facilitators of Culturally Relevant and/or Critical Literacy professional development from different backgrounds and jobs who worked or are still working for the large urban district on which this case study is based. The goal of the elite interviews was to gain insight into facilitators’ goals for professional development. The elite

interviews were conducted over Google Meet (due to COVID 19) and were recorded for note taking purposes with permission from the participants. There was one pilot elite interview, in which the questions were tried out and the researcher reflected on the questions and the process after this interview. There were minimal changes to the process based on this pilot elite interview.

As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) stated, “The qualitative interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (p. 1). In this project, it was important to gain insight into the professional development facilitators’ feelings and mindsets focused on culturally relevant and critical literacy. There was a delicate balance in conducting these interviews and honoring teachers input. “It seems so simple to interview, but it is hard to do well. Research interviewing involves a cultivation of conversational skills that most adult human beings already possess by virtue of being able to ask questions” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 1). Using a semistructured interview format allows research methodology to capture the nuances of individual teachers’ learning and experiences with culturally relevant instruction and critical literacy. McMillan and Schumaker in 2001 describe semistructured interview questions as “having no choices from which the respondent selects an answer. Rather, the question is phrased to allow for individual responses” (p. 204). Using a semistructured interview format allowed for some structure, but allowed the interviewee to share their voices in this research project. History has shown that conversations and interviews are an excellent way to pass on knowledge and information over time.

Conversations are an old way of obtaining systematic knowledge. In ancient Greece Thucydides interviewed participants from the Peloponnesian Wars to write the history of the wars, and Socrates developed philosophical knowledge through dialogues with his Sophist opponents. The term *interview*, however, is of rather recent origin; it came into use in the 17th century” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 7).

Gaining information through interviews is one of the methodologies used in this case study. This research project used four elite interviews with district leaders who have led culturally relevant and critical literacy professional development . As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) point out,

Elite interviews are with persons who are leaders or experts in a community, who are usually in powerful positions...When an interview is established, the prevailing power asymmetry of the interview situation may be canceled out by the powerful position of the elite interviewee (p. 147).

These elite interviews were essential in gleaning information about their philosophy and planning techniques and provide input into facilitating professional development and follow up opportunities for learning. The themes in insights gathered from these elite interviews allowed the researcher to analyze both planning and process for upcoming needs regarding professional development and other methods for teacher learning and growth (i.e. follow up coaching, independent reading, other teaching resources and tools). “Elite interviewees will tend to have a secure status, so it may be feasible to challenge their statements, with the provocations possibly leading to new

insights” (p. 147, Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The elite interviews provided a balance of information to the teachers’ insights based on what was planned in the professional development. The elite interview participants had a low level of risk because they will not be named in the research and they participated on a voluntary basis. The elite interviewees signed a consent form prior to beginning their interviews.

Teacher focus groups. The researcher used responses from the post professional development survey to guide the teacher focus groups and teacher interview questions. Teacher focus group questions can be found in Appendix B, Questions for Teacher focus groups. Focus groups were set up in groups of 4-5 teachers depending on how many teachers are able to participate. Participants received consent letters explaining the focus group protocol, with the option to accept or decline participation in the focus group. Teachers included in the focus group were asked to discuss questions about their experiences with professional development and learning during the professional development. There may be a level of discomfort for these teachers, because of the sensitivity in discussing culturally relevant teaching practices. None of the teachers were named in the project, they will remain anonymous in the paper. In addition, they all volunteered to participate and they participated on a strictly voluntary basis.

The questions were given ahead of time so that people could think about their answers prior to the focus group. It was conducted on Google Meet or Zoom (due to COVID 19) and recorded. This allowed for participants to answer questions and have their answers recorded. The researcher served as moderator and ensured there was equity of voice among participants. This gave people an opportunity to share their perceptions

based on the questions being asked. The questions were focused on the research question: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers?

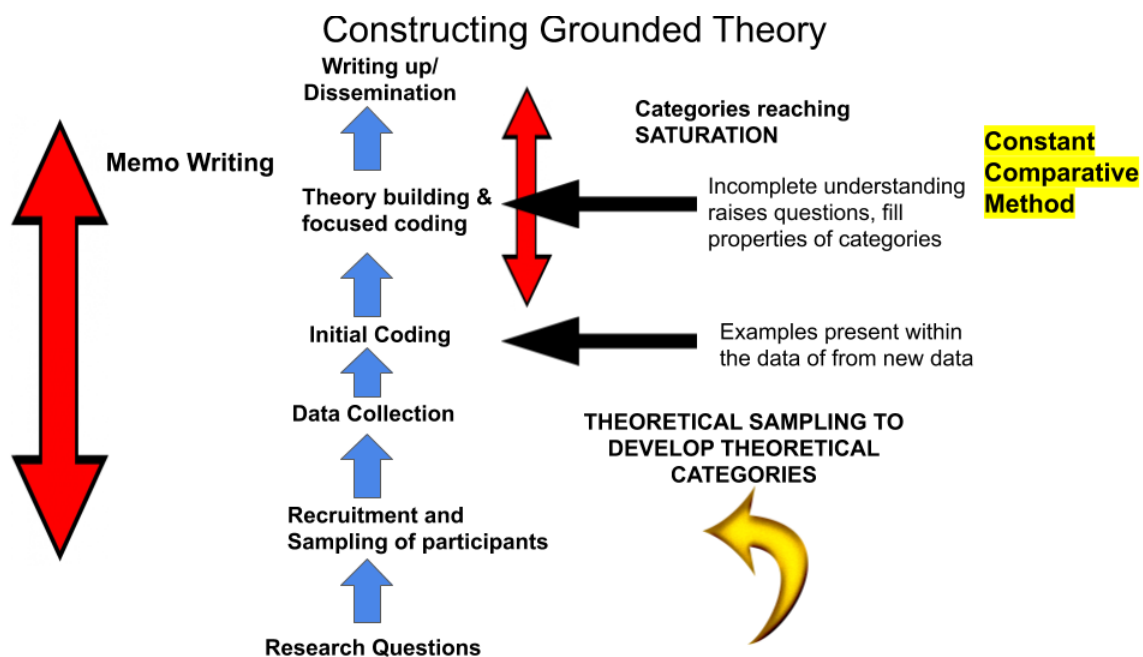
As Krueger and Casey (2009) point out, “The purpose of conducting a focus group is to listen and gather information. It is a way to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service. Focus groups are used to gather opinions” (p. 2). Listening to teachers' opinions allows the researcher to dig deeper into the mindset and learning of teachers and provide an analysis of future professional development options. There were a few teachers who were interviewed due to scheduling issues with the focus groups. The researcher used the same questions (as the focus groups) for these interviews. As Krueger and Casey point out, “A focus group study is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (p. 2, 2009). In this project, it was important to gain insight into teachers' feelings and mindset related to professional development focused on culturally relevant and critical literacy. In addition to the focus groups there were two teacher interviews that were used due to timing and scheduling issues. The teachers were asked the same questions that were asked during the focus groups.

Data Coding and Analysis

Chamaz (2014) defined grounded theory as “ methods consistent with systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves” (p. 1). As Kathy Charmaz (2014) writes, “with grounded theory methods, you shape and reshape your data collection and therefore, refine your

data and increase your knowledge” (p. 26). Throughout this process, it is important to remain flexible to the possibilities and voices that emerged from the data. In analyzing the data from the elite interviews, teacher focus groups and teacher interviews, it was important to keep an open mind and listen for answers and follow up questions that may inform future research endeavors. Charmaz (2014) identifies this as constructivist grounded theory, “a systematic approach to social justice inquiry that fosters integrating subjective experiences with social conditions” (p. 326). This process is explained in Figure 4.1: Grounded Theory Steps and Procedures, which is adapted from Tweed & Charmaz (2011, p. 133) and Charmaz (2014, p. 18). This graphic was created for this project, but is adapted from Charmaz’s work.

Figure 4.1: Grounded Theory Steps and Procedures



Coding. Some theories and conclusions based on the codes and themes emerged.

In following the process outlined in Figure 4.1 by Tweed and Charmaz (2011) and

Charmaz (2014). The overarching themes from the elite interviews are adult learning themes and student voice themes; these themes attempt to solidify themes or phrases that represent participants's assumptions (Charmaz, 2014). Various methods of coding were used that influenced my grounded theory analysis process. Within the coding and analysis process, initial coding, focused coding, and summarized coding were used to capture larger themes. In reflecting on the coding, a table was created with different coding labels. One initial reflection was that the data fell into two sub-categories: adult focused responses and student focused responses. When shifting to these two major categories, the coding became more streamlined and the themes had a pattern. Codes were examined to determine which could be combined into an umbrella that would capture key words and phrases. For example, three separate codes: organizational commitment to culturally responsive teaching, gathering feedback from teachers and teacher observations were combined into one overarching code, I put these all together. The code is: *Organizational commitment to Culturally Relevant teaching & gathering feedback from teachers; including classroom observations*. This approach allowed me to look for these themes in future teacher interviews and focus group transcripts and analyze them using these broader codes. The rest of this chapter is focused on outlining the steps taken to arrive at these overarching themes and concepts.

Overarching Themes and Concepts. I began with initial coding methods, including in vivo coding (Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding requires the researcher to “study (the) data closely--line by line--and to begin conceptualizing (his or her) ideas” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 19). During this first phase of coding, I looked for themes that

emerged and color coded them as I read through the transcripts line by line looking for patterns and emerging themes. I then wrote the codes (parallel) to the text which were likely to contribute to theory or specifically relate to my research questions, which allowed me to analyze my coding and understanding of the process (Charmaz, 2014). At this point, I began to note in vivo codes, which highlight participants' verbatim responses. "In vivo codes are characteristic of social worlds and organizational settings" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 135).

Data analysis. Grounded theory was used as a data analysis tool; this was an effective qualitative research method because it allowed for flexibility and comparative methods. As Charmaz explained in 2014, "Many researchers use one or two grounded theory strategies, but not all" (p. 15). She summarizes grounded theory strategies in the following list:

1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process.
2. Analyze actions and processes rather than themes and structure
3. Use comparative methods
4. Draw on data (e.g. narratives and descriptions) in service of developing new conceptual categories.
5. Develop inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis.
6. Emphasize theory construction rather than description or application of current theories.
7. Engage in theoretical sampling.

8. Search for variation in the studied categories or process.
9. Pursue developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic

(Charmaz, 2014, p. 15)

In this research project, the researcher focused on using steps three, four and five based on Charmaz's list of descriptors for grounded theory. This process is explained in more detail in chapter four.

Within grounded theory, a constant comparative method was used to analyze information from each data source throughout the process, then examining this information as a whole once all the data was completed for a final analysis. The constant comparative method “combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing” (Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, & Scott, 1993, p. 280). The constant comparative methodology incorporates four stages: “(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105). The surveys were analyzed to inform the content of the focus groups and interviews. There was a pilot elite interview which helped inform the flow of the questions and how they were ordered. The elite interviews and focus groups were coded by themes and analyzed using a constant comparative method to gain insights. Based on all of the information from the data collection I summarized the findings from this qualitative research project.

Overarching Themes and Concepts. I began with initial coding methods, including in vivo coding (Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding requires the researcher to “study (the) data closely--line by line--and to begin conceptualizing (his or her) ideas” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 19). During this first phase of coding, I looked for themes that emerged and color coded them as I read through the transcripts line by line looking for patterns and emerging themes. I then wrote the codes (parallel) to the text which were likely to contribute to theory or specifically relate to my research questions, which allowed me to analyze my coding and understanding of the process (Charmaz, 2014). At this point, I began to note in vivo codes, which highlight participants’ verbatim responses. “In vivo codes are characteristic of social worlds and organizational settings” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 135).

Initial coding: Connections to theoretical concepts. After the beginning coding and in vivo coding, several themes surfaced and it became necessary to do focused coding. This helped to narrow the elite interview responses and look for overarching themes based on the number of responses per code, as well as the connections to my literature review and how they related to my research questions. The codes and their connections help to summarize some findings based on the impact of professional development on culturally responsive teaching practices and critical literacy. These overarching themes from the elite interviews were compared to the responses from teachers in the focus groups and teacher interviews.

Summary

My research questions are focused on professional development which provides knowledge and strategies for teachers on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy. My primary research question is: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? My secondary research question is: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? Chapter 4 focuses on the data collected from the teacher focus groups and the elite interviews. Chapter 5 includes the analysis of research and the researcher's limitations and reactions to the project. It will also serve as a guide for the researchers and other professional development facilitators on what lessons were learned during this case study project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

This dissertation is focused on the impact of professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy practices. As a researcher, I'm interested in how professional development impacts teachers' mindset and their instructional practices. Multiple research methods were used to gather data for this project. Data was collected from elite interviews and teacher focus groups and teacher interviews. The elite interviews and post professional development survey data provided information to create questions as well as document analysis. The first research question, How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers was addressed in focus groups and interviews with teachers. The second question, What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? These questions were addressed in the elite interviews with professional development facilitators and in teacher interviews and focus groups composed of the professional development participants.

Data Gathering and Analysis

This case study was conducted within the qualitative paradigm using elite interviews, teacher focus groups, and teacher interviews incorporating professional development survey data to inform the questions asked. Documents used in the professional development preparation for teachers in this case study were analyzed. My

interest in using qualitative data was informed by the insights and lived experiences of my participants. Grounded theory was the data analysis process for this research.

Elite interviews. Elite interviews were conducted with four teacher leaders who facilitated culturally relevant and/or critical literacy professional development for teachers. These interviews were conducted first to look for codes and themes. The questions for the elite interviews are found in Appendix A, Questions for Elite Interviews of District Leaders. The following codes were used during the teacher focus groups and teacher interviews (See Table 4.1: Elite Interview Codes). This allowed me to compare and contrast the goals set by the professional development facilitators with the goals of the teachers experiencing the professional development sessions. Participants in the focus groups and elite interviews were assigned a code to ensure anonymity among participants. Table 4.1 explains the elite interview codes.

Table 4.1 Elite Interview Codes

EIAAF= Elite Interview African American female	EIWF= Elite Interview white female	EINAF= Elite Interview Native American female	EILF= Elite Interview Latina Female
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A similar coding structure was used for the three teacher interviews. Table 4.2 outlines the structure of this coding process.

Table 4.2 Teacher Interview and Focus Group Codes

TIWF= Teacher Interview White Female	TIAAF= Teacher Interview African American Female	TIWM= Teacher Interview White Male
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When the elite interviews were completed, I reflected on this process and read through the notes, looking for themes in my initial coding. There were over forty codes that emerged from the four elite interviews. After doing some mapping of the data, I looked for overall patterns. There were two overarching themes that arose from these elite interviews: adult focused themes and student focused themes. I was able to condense the forty codes down to sixteen codes in the adult focused themes and eight themes for the student focused themes. These overarching themes were used to code the teacher interviews as well, with a few additional codes noted later in this analysis. The first two columns on the left are adult focused and the column on the far right is student focused. These are found in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Elite Interview Coding Themes: Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Interviews

Adult focused themes:	Adult focused themes:	Student focused themes:
Organizational commitment to Culturally Relevant teaching & gathering feedback from teachers; including classroom observations	Adult learning & mindsets and teacher experience/background knowledge	Students seeing themselves: windows & mirrors
Building teacher curiosity & reflection and relationships; dialogue and reflection	Modeling for teachers & practice and application and learning through discomfort	Student achievement data
Cognitive dissonance & transfer of knowledge	Relating to personal experience and storytelling & immersive cultural experiences	Student work & examples and transfer to student learning
Qualitative data; difficult to measure, individual impact on teachers and survey data	Negative experiences	Opportunities for hands on learning & diverse literature

Flexible & adapting to the needs of learners & relating to students of color	Narrow focus & using evidence	Student and parent feedback
Healthy work environment & shared norms	Acknowledgement & diverse perspectives (counter narratives & different lenses)	Negative experiences
Developmental spectrum & humility	Culturally relevant & critical literacy tools & strategies & critical literacy frames	Student voice & student opinion about their unique experiences in school & tools that capture their opinion
Resistance (adult) & leadership priorities	Asset based vs. deficit based mindset	

In addition to coding and merging the data through focused coding, I wrote researcher memos, to reflect on the data and help make sense of the patterns and themes that were emerging from my research. As Charmaz writes in 2014, “certain codes crystallize meanings and actions in the data. Writing extended notes, called memos, on telling codes helps you develop your ideas” (p. 19). This process helped me look for larger themes that could guide future research and potentially guide professional development.

After completing the coding for my elite interviews, I wrote a researcher’s memo. An excerpt follows: In reflecting on the four elite interviews it was interesting to see the different perspectives of the facilitators themselves. However, despite the differences in their approach and outlook, there were some significant themes that emerged across the four interviews.

- Building teacher curiosity and reflection was mentioned twelve times across the four interviews.
- Using Culturally Relevant Teaching and Critical Literacy tools was mentioned nine times.
- Valuing diverse perspectives and counter narratives came up thirteen times across the interviews.
- Adult learning and mindsets came up twelve times.
- Student voice and perspective came up six times.

Teacher focus groups and teacher interviews. Teacher focus groups and teacher interviews were conducted over the course of a few months, as I gathered information from teachers who have experienced culturally responsive and/or critical literacy professional development within the urban school district utilized for this case study research. The interviews and focus groups were semi-structured. All the teachers were asked the same seven questions with some follow up probing (See Appendix B, Questions for Teacher Focus Groups). There were two focus groups and three teacher interviews used for this research. All the interviews and focus groups took place over Google Meet due to COVID 19 limitations and social distancing guidelines. Data from the teacher interviews and focus groups were coded and analyzed to look for themes and insights. Information from the teacher interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed and further analyzed for themes and insights. Documents from professional development were also analyzed and utilized to create interview questions. As I

examined the data there were themes that emerged from the adult focused themes. The adult focused themes that emerged from the elite interviews were:

- Using culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy tools helps to build teacher curiosity and reflection.
- Valuing diverse perspective and counter narratives is essential in creating culturally relevant teaching practices.
- Critical literacy is dependent on listening to student voices and perspectives.
- All of these conditions are predicated on the goals of impacting and fostering adult learning and mindsets.

These same codes and themes from the elite interviews were used in analyzing the teacher focus groups and interviews. There were some themes that emerged for both of the groups, and there were other themes that did not transfer between the different types of interviews/focus groups. The teacher focus groups and interviews had some themes that stood out over the other ones. Table 4.4 summarizes the themes of the overall teacher responses.

Table 4.4 Teacher Focus Groups and Teacher Interviews: Overall Responses

Adult focused themes	Student focused themes
Building teacher curiosity/reflection & relationships & dialogue Reflection Total responses: 8	Student voice & Student opinion about their experience in school & Tools that capture student voices and opinion Total responses: 6
Culturally Relevant & Critical Literacy Tools & strategies & critical literacy frame	Students seeing themselves: windows & mirrors Total responses: 5

Total responses: 7	
Adult learning & Mindsets, Teacher experience/background knowledge Total responses: 7	Student work & examples & Transfer learning to students Total responses: 1
Developmental spectrum & Humility Total responses: 6	
Acknowledgement & Diverse perspectives: (counter narratives and different lenses) Total responses: 6	
Modeling for teachers & Practice and application Learning through discomfort Total responses: 5	
Healthy work environment & Shared norms Total responses: 3	
Relating to personal experiences & Integrating perspectives & Storytelling & Immersive cultural experience Total responses: 1	
Flexible and adapting to needs of learners & Relating to students of color Total responses: 1	
Resistance (adult learners) & priorities (leadership) Total responses: 1	
Narrow focus & using evidence Total responses: 1	

Adult focused themes. The theme that stood out the most from the teacher focus groups and interviews was *Building Teacher Curiosity/Reflection, Relationships, Dialogue and Reflection*. In stepping back and analyzing this after both the elite interviews and the teacher focus groups and interviews, this makes a lot of sense. One of the overall goals of professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching and critical literacy is providing teachers the time and space to reflect and dialogue with their peers. Based on several of the teacher comments, this is essential to their learning and reflection. Table 4.5 includes teacher quotes from both the focus groups and teacher interviews about the importance of building teacher curiosity/reflection and relationships, dialogue and reflection.

Table 4.5 Building Teacher Curiosity/Reflection and Relationships
and Dialogue Reflection

Building Teacher Curiosity/Reflection and Relationships and Dialogue Reflection
Focus Group 1
I agree--when we speak to each other as professionals, and then go back to classrooms, my students really took off. What's the perspective of other characters, it's a safer place to learn...3rd grade Jack And the Beanstalk... It's an older story...more relevant to right now...it's a great springboard....not scary...That was the difficult thing with distance learning, some families didn't want this to come up...teaching you to be a critical thinker--who has the power in stories.
I think making sure we take the time to talk. We are always trying to meet the needs of our students. We all have backgrounds and our own culture. Situations where a large number is from one culture...use each other's expertise. Try to better help students, and be more culturally relevant for our students.
I feel that discussions as basic as what is equality vs. equity....PD presentations, still confuse the two. Hazy--what is equity of expectation...You don't want to pigeonhole someone...You want everyone to succeed and how do you measure it...

I am inspired by the training to learn more. My biggest take away was to learn more. Connect with other staff and learn more about the school community, going in with a beginners approach. Next step--practical, learning from the community. How my class fits in and trying to figure out ways to learn about the community.

Focus Group 2

I have found two relevant ways--researching and reading books. This gives me a better understanding. Another way is by looking at other teachers, modeling. I can do that too.

From my perspective, it's important work to do--I know that now my district has every Friday, groups for teachers working on a book. Coaching for Equity--unpack and reflect and see where this can impact our work. Negative vibes, childhood, not being knowledgeable...for me I think PD, Elena Aguilar's book, literature. I love small groups with teachers and ways to be more inclusive in coaching spaces.

Teacher Interviews

That has come up and it's because of the conversations we are having. I'm very careful about the texts I use in the first place. Sacagewia, She was "taken". Good that was honest, having that conversation right then and there. I start changing my language. It wasn't just a fun thing. It's a learning process for me. That's what I do when I'm teaching. Thanksgiving, trying to think about how that is presented. I have had many different conversations.

I've been doing my own reading. Change our curriculum, use our own resources. What's going to really work, just because you have a routine, as you look at your resources, I look at things differently. *Why are Black Kids Sitting Together*, *Warmth of Other Suns*--goal: to reeducate myself about my history. Black professionals, author, *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, Love PD was very inspiring to me. We all have our own biases, what we are taught, it's good to question. I do a lot of podcasts, I want to hear other voices, where do I need to grow. It helps me understand other perspectives, I had very limited perspectives. I'm realizing that now. It's just helping me if I can't help myself transform. I can bring that back into my own teaching. Recognizing where I'm not doing as well--there is a lot about routine.

The next two themes that stood out from the teacher focus groups and interviews were *Adult Learning and Mindsets*, *Teacher Experience/Background Knowledge* and *Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frames*. These themes also reflect the goals of the professional development facilitators. They sought to use tools to shift teacher mindsets and adult learning to impact classroom experiences for students. Table 4.6 shares quotes focused on the theme, adult learning and mindsets, teacher experience/background knowledge.

Table 4.6 Adult Learning and Mindsets, Teacher Experience/Background Knowledge

Adult Learning and Mindsets, Teacher Experience/Background Knowledge
Focus Group 1
I would say, the speaker and the speaker's approach is really important. It's very easy in these situations to get defenses up...one wants to speak the truth, but may be afraid to do this...authentic discussions...somebody like an Aura says, tell me honestly...a person who is really seeking information back.
Absolutely, what she said--politics and mandatory training is hard...things that lead to structural inequalities...lots of white females in the room...we are within the system in a similar place... One challenge can be the echo chamber...similar minded people. You might not have the outside view...Or expand your view point...It also can be challenging...the conversations can lead to ...we'll keep trying these things...politically and historically. Avoiding defeatism...leadership can help to combat that. Achievable objectives.
(The PD) inspired me so greatly to write a capstone at Hamline--on CRT within a Montessori learning environment. I did a lot of research. It was a great opportunity to learn about Montessori and also Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT), be more explicit about that and being more Montessori, she was brilliant and a scientific mind. CRT is also about that...I learned through my research. High expectations is one of the most important ideas behind this. Giving them the support they need to reach those.
Focus Group 2

I think that we are all in different places on our journey. I'm very passionate about coaching--*Coaching for Equity* by Elena Aguilar. Such a challenge is that we are all in different places on that trajectory. We have different backgrounds--this makes it harder to utilize CRT. How can I do this tomorrow--not just a box. It's a mindset I'm trying to tackle, get dirty, ask questions, let's ask, research. It takes more work, than just picking up a curriculum guide. Two big challenges.

Professional development, reading, talking with others, FaceBook, Twitter--constant daily dose on your "down time." PD can also be a great tool as well. Read more and learn from others.

Deep reflection--it's best when you make it on your own mindset--sit and have your own space and time. Writing down things gives me space and time.

Teacher Interviews:

I think what's most helpful to me is doing my own reading. How I look at where I'm coming from and how I speak to my children. I started with myself, a lot of reading. Our climate right now is so hard.

I'm not there yet, I'm trying to transform my language. Professional Development--think about what you are teaching and think about how you present it to kids. It's difficult in Distance Learning, not as warm. When kids are sensitive, it's hard to read their faces. It's hard with screens. I'm trying to make sure I'm connecting with students. We are working on changing our questions.

Building on the adult learning themes, *Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frames* stood out in the teacher focus groups and interviews. Teachers reflected on tools that have been helpful to their teaching and classroom discourse. Table 4.7 illustrates quotes from *Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frames*.

Table 4.7 Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frame

Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frame

Focus group 1

Critical literacy--one of the biggest insights I gained. Different modalities--digital literacies and how the medium really shapes the message. Ongoing conversations. Bringing Culturally relevant teaching into science seemed like a challenge. Conversing with other educators & gaining insights...

I think it did. For myself, the discussions were helpful, students in the moment, but later it comes up...later thinking about this...you could see the next day they would talk about this. I think a lot more literature, speakers in and speaking from their experience, less dominant experiences. Critical literacy was huge--I knew that I could do those things and go deeper. Have permission--not just the next story and so much good came out of this. Academically, they were engaging more, writing more, not just being told.. Their parents noticed more.

Focus Group 2

Gloria Ladson Billings suggests that teachers use culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms. This gives me perspectives in their classrooms. We do have questions--multilingual has some questions, it's about 10-12 questions. That's the one that we have used. critical literacy protocol.

Teacher Interviews:

Some of the tools we have been given, critical literacy protocol and really just time to talk about this with teammates.

Well, we have had time going into the units. Going into our given curriculum--what is community? What does that mean? Police Officer, how do we address that? First and second grade. Lots of different meanings of police. Being honest, in the Benchmark curriculum. Police are helpful and they are not always helpful. I don't want to put my agenda out there. Most people try to help, they need to talk about it...my cousin or my Mom was pushed by a police officer.

Tools: Books/ Critical Literacy protocol, I'm just saying it's harder to keep it at the forefront. More condensed and not get lost in a whole other PD. I just want to focus on one thing at a time. The best tools are getting time to work with colleagues. Break out sessions and time to talk and help each other...

In addition, there were three other themes that stood out from the teacher focus groups and interviews:

- Adult Developmental Spectrum and Humility
- Acknowledgement and Diverse Perspectives: (counter narratives and different lenses)
- Modeling for Teachers and Practice and Application and Learning through Discomfort

These themes signify the value of diverse perspectives and the spectrum of learning that occurs within a staff of educators. It also raises the importance of modeling and providing examples during professional development. Table 4.8 shares teacher quotes about the development spectrum and humility involved in professional development experiences.

Table 4.8 Developmental Spectrum and Humility

Developmental Spectrum and Humility
Focus Group 1
I always felt very supported by you (professional development at school). Our speaker was outstanding, I never felt judged by him. He spoke about LBGTQ--very comfortable--no dumb questions....for myself in this moment.
I guess it's just such a political time, that whatever conversation we have, there is other baggage. What's being communicated isn't just what we are talking about. Some people feel forced to go...it's just a big question...how do we get meaningful discussions, in a way that steps away from politics...some people don't want to be forced to do anything. We can't always have these conversations... we are all on different points on the continuum...

I agree, making it more personable and I did this in my capstone. That's a big thing about being white. You have your own story. Being open to sharing...what is your culture? Everyone comes from a culture...when you leave your culture,it becomes more aware. Relating it ...to outcomes and being more objective. Not as much about feelings, it's about the students. Not some psycho-analytical--always for the kids...we won't have people feeling as uncomfortable about sharing...support the kids.

Focus Group 2

Know your audience--background guidance, what do they perceive? Use their own knowledge. Then jump on nuances, use the knowledge of the participants. Paper--what do you know, feelings,impressions--engage. Time for reflections.

Teacher Interviews:

I think the challenges are that we all come from different places. We present what we are changing and transforming. I find it challenging. Time to process it, and get with your team and on your own, what you are going to do. All of this transformation is pushed and how to do the nuts and bolts. It's a longer journey, but it's more than that. Sometimes it's a bit too much. One focus at a time. Just like we try to meet kids, we need to meet teachers...It's exciting and I like change. I'm excited about presenting things--it's not as easy when you sit there for half a day, then give time and space to do things. Language/tools. Whole big pictures...

Well, I think that I will continue to have the conversations. Having one focus, having time to implement and reflect. People are in different places, it's okay to push the envelope. I was in a PD, I thought we were done with that...I was surprised. That's why we need to get together, it's hard for researchers and Admin to do this work. Smaller doses and time to reflect. How have we done and come back? Do a link, then the teachers go away and they have to plan. Smaller doses and a game plan--I can statements. Talking in smaller groups and planning teams--there is so much focus on online teaching. I appreciate the reminders, accountability with smaller teams. We are trying to do that--keeping us more on that focus, or we might get lost...

In addition, there were some insightful quotes about acknowledgement and diverse perspectives (counter narratives and different lenses) from teacher focus groups and interviews. Many of the teachers had important insights into how they have been

impacted by professional development and peer conversations. Table 4.9 shares teacher quotes from both focus groups and interviews with teachers.

Table 4.9 Acknowledgement and Diverse Perspectives

Acknowledgement and Diverse Perspectives (counter narratives and different lenses)
Focus Group 1
Having articles and books & people to talk with about my teaching.
Books have been very helpful--period..how little I know and experience what students of color think and their experiences.
I agree, books are very helpful, because they allow me to really process my experience. I learned about CRT in school, but it refreshes...
Having guest speakers at Professional development sessions, Aura, taught me a lot about why culturally relevant teaching is so important and why we need to do more.
When we talked about microaggressions, that really helped me see things from another person's perspective. Many of my friends and family are white...just seeing the world through the eyes of somebody else...Literature, trying to read alot, <i>How to be an Anti-Racist</i> and <i>White Fragility</i> --Insight which I hope will make me be a better teacher.
I think for me, the PD that I've done through my district has been helpful. What really changed my mindset the most. An experience that I had prior--learning about STEM. Very diverse--female empowering--different racial and SES...lots of HS youth. Such a different perspective...Filled a lot of foggy areas...
Seeing people of color who were working together in the context of science, and how that confidence grew...not as a leader, but as a participant...
Focus Group 2 and Interviews
What has helped me, and what has been impactful is having books from diverse cultures, authentic perspectives. Having people not being left out. Who is left out of the story, why, having a protocol of questions. Internalize and model To read between the lines--benefit from it. Helps you see through it, for the benefit of everyone.

I teach 1st grade--teaching is political in my experience. If you have this as your philosophy-Windows & Mirrors--sliding glass doors--where are the doors? Anything about depth and complexity is helpful. Looking at multiple perspectives is important...

An additional theme that stood out from the adult learning themes was Modeling for teachers and practice and application; learning through discomfort. Teachers had interesting perspectives related to this theme, this is found in table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Modeling for Teachers and Practice and Application;
Learning through Discomfort

Modeling for Teachers and Practice and Application; Learning Through Discomfort
Focus Group 1
I will just say what she said. As a white female walking in there...if you are presenting. If you have no voice...ironic...not wanting to say the wrong thing. There is no wrong answer, you can say something...nice to feel heard or respected in that way...curious how a white male would feel.
I can speak to that...there were times when I didn't feel comfortable sharing. Some of the comments...made me uncomfortable. Depending on the Facilitator, I was either comfortable, or felt less uncomfortable...
I have read a few books this summer. I let myself off the hook, I'm a female, I know what it feels like disempowered, I'm Jewish, but my understanding is that the whiteness I have, how that has just paved the way for me. White Supremacy and Me--you don't get a pass if your white. If you're married to a person of color, probing, that's a difficult thing to hear. I hope researchers--at the beginning of a presentation--ways that I am presenting in a racist system--we are all owning it...presenters in general--talking to the other people--they are "woke" Being brave enough as a presenter is important.
I agree taking the time to make it important, time to think and come back. Changes you have made, small in roads. The reading and the bullet points were helpful, they helped

us and spring boarded...variety of presenters...everybody with things they have noticed about their own journey...weakness or vulnerability..really done.

Focus Group 2

I agree, reading... I thought I learned the most from other people's non-examples. Mistakes made, personal impact stories. Conversations with like-minded people: I think where I have a trusting relationship. Speech teacher--she was able to share her own experiences. When I hear this, I think this. She was a black person, 10-15 years older than me. On the same wavelength, different perspective. Different from someone who says something than me.

To be honest, the most impactful pieces have been the really negative comments--said or whispered. It reminds me we have work to do. Not everyone is on the same page. Painful things to hear and experience, who are teaching in this day and age.

Student focused themes. In terms of the transfer of professional development focused on culturally responsive and critical literacy practices, the impact on students came up with two significant themes.

- Student voice and student opinion about their experience in school and tools that capture student voices and opinion
- Students seeing themselves: windows and mirrors within curriculum

In Table 4.11 there are quotes from teachers in both focus groups and interviews that share their beliefs about student voice and student opinion and their experiences in school and tools that capture student voices and opinion. These are based on teacher perceptions and their interpretation of what students may need.

Table 4.11 Student Voice and Student Opinion About their Experience in School and Tools that Capture Student Voices and Opinion

Student Voice and Student Opinion About their Experience in School and Tools that Capture Student Voices and Opinion (Based on the Perception of Teachers)

Focus Group 1

What I've realized is literacy is culturally defined. What I have associated as literacy all of my life. That's not what my students always think of as literacy. The questions being asked can be biased as well. Much deeper...

Because I teach science, I don't always have literacy rich connections--the other elements of literacy--talk, equity of voice, authentic interactions, sometimes those who may be marginalized. Also in writing...mystery of the unknown with distance learning...being intentional about the questions I'm asking...and promoting that.

I would agree, children's literature, multicultural, we have an incredible library with a lot of resources...Sometimes they don't know where to look...I try to direct them to the books. Give students an equity of voice. In classrooms. Mainstream classroom, raise their hands, attempt to answer the questions. They may be intimidated. Trying to get students to have a voice. Comfortable--getting them to share.

The dream would be--structural changes, smaller classes, speakers, go into the community--see community experts, hire staff that represents diverse life experiences...beyond our planning and instructional...

It would be great to give students a survey to give teachers feedback on how well they did create equity.

Focus Group 2

I don't think it's linear--a teacher is under scrutiny--Something Happened in Our Town....Her class talks about hard topics--sent it as a link...sent it to the police. The teacher has been through terrible situations...impact.

Protest at the school board meeting--supporting the teacher. She had students saying this is what I learned from her. Think about her and listen...what the students have said. Demonstration--more impact on students...how are we impacting students.

The parents promoted the fear of the police.

Researchers--what are the tools that we can use to listen to students and understand the impact of CRT and CL.

There were several comments related to giving students opportunities to learn about other cultures and to see themselves in the curriculum and literature (windows and mirrors). These comments are captured in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Students Seeing Themselves: Windows and Mirrors

Students Seeing Themselves: Windows & Mirrors (Based on the Perception of Teachers)
Focus Group 1
Regarding Culturally relevant teaching, one thing I've learned is to be more explicit, teaching towards my students cultures. It's not enough to just celebrate their culture. Not just trivialize this...Using student's culture to support them academically. Lightbulbs go off...relating something that might be new to them...something from their culture. Tutoring 4th grade student, Social studies HW, Somali student, civil war...his country went through a civil war...That helped him have a better understanding...related and helped him understand...piece of reading to do, no familiarity...makes the vocab, syntax, and vocab difficult--coming from their life.
Having more books from different cultures. One student in particular it was hard to engage him....when he saw books with the name Mohamed. Familiar...where did you get this book? Matching those books, and bringing in Muslim books, made it a deeper understanding. Government, laws--relate it and make better connections. Lots of trouble the year before...really powerful. Mom came in for conferences--
I would say, children's literature--stories I feel draw young kids in. They provide opportunities. Deep issues without having to talk about them face to face and head on...not easy or perfect. I had a student when I showed her the book, <i>Under my Hijab</i> , was drawn to the book, but when I wanted to read it to the class, she felt very uncomfortable, differenceness can be hard, that's the beginning--make sure those kids are represented...they can feel more free.
Focus Group 2

I know the beginning of the school year, we had the initial one Zaretta Hammond--CRT and the Brain, in my last district. Looking at how students and families can be involved. Using the doors where students can be involved. I'm starting Bettina Love's book, *I Want To Do More Than Survive*.

Teacher Interviews

I have second graders: They were like okay, they were more in the listening mode. I didn't delve into it too deeply. One student said that she didn't know how Native Americans dressed. I was surprised that she thought that Natives dressed differently. She just didn't know...I was thinking about that in my own teaching. We do a lot of sharing--Natives are lots of things: chefs, lawyers...Lack of photos, etc. Thinking back to the criticality part. Maybe start with non-fiction first, before legends...stories of famous Native Americans. Pocahontas, Saqajewa...transform for storytelling and learning more about Lakota and Dakota people. It's really important. It's a little overwhelming at times... It was an attempt...pick it apart.learning more about Lakota and Dakota people. It's really important. It's a little overwhelming at times... It was an attempt...pick it apart.

Teachers noted the importance of giving students the opportunity to share their voice and opinions. They also spoke about the importance of providing curriculum, literature and materials that reflect windows and mirrors for students. One teacher said, "I would say, children's literature--stories I feel draw young kids in. They provide opportunities, deep issues without having to talk about them face to face and head on...it's not easy or perfect..."

These two themes were the only significant themes that came up related to students from the teacher interviews and focus group discussions. There were additional student focused themes that came up from the elite interviews, which is one of the goals put forth by the facilitators. They hoped to offer additional tools for capturing student

voice, a transfer of teacher to student knowledge and an impact on student achievement data. Interestingly, none of these topics emerged from the teacher focus groups or interviews. The initial focus on student voices and students seeing themselves in the curriculum and learning about other cultures and races was more of a focus of the teachers involved in this case study.

Elite Interviews and Themes. The elite interviews were focused on interviewing professional development facilitators who work with teachers and have provided culturally relevant and critical literacy professional development. The data that was collected from these interviews supports another angle of this research. The elite interviews focused on the goals and hopes set forth by facilitators leading professional development centered on culturally relevant teaching and/or critical literacy. Based on the elite interviews, there were several codes/themes that emerged from their comments, these are shared in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Elite Interview Overall Theme Responses

Adult Focused Themes	Student Focused Themes
Acknowledgement & Diverse perspectives: (counter narratives and different lenses) Total responses: 13	Student voice & Student opinion about their experience in school & Tools that capture student voices and opinion Total responses: 6
Building teacher curiosity/reflection & relationships & dialogue Reflection Total responses: 12	Students seeing themselves: windows & mirrors Total responses: 2
Adult learning & Mindsets, Teacher experience/background knowledge Total responses: 12	Student work & examples & Transfer learning to students Total responses: 2

Culturally Relevant & Critical Literacy Tools & strategies & critical literacy frame Total responses: 9	
Modeling for teachers & Practice and application Learning through discomfort Total responses: 5	
Qualitative vs. Quantitative: 4	
Developmental spectrum & Humility Total responses: 3	
Healthy work environment & Shared norms Total responses: 3	

Adult Learning Themes in Elite Interviews: The next section will focus on the quotes from the elite interviews that were highlighted in the researcher memo. The most noted theme that emerged was *valuing diverse perspectives and counter narratives*, this came up thirteen times across the interviews, this is summarized in table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Acknowledgement and Diverse Perspectives

Acknowledgement & Diverse Perspectives (Counter Narratives and Different Lenses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I think having an understanding of your own lens and an understanding of lenses--minimum of three lenses. ● Counter-narratives and Under-representation in the curriculum. ● My own lens--multi-racial, woman of color, what's missing and going deeper.
Not taking an expert lens...bridge ideas and feed off others energy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ease in and gratitude and acknowledgement--new or beginning acknowledgement

- Land Acknowledgement--Native lands
- Nothing is new, collective wisdom, work towards solving problems.

Virtual space: Kendi's book study--moderator--utilizing music, chat function, break out rooms, small group opportunities, framing introductions, then smaller rooms--prompt to look at ahead of time.

Newcomer--Talking about the American Revolution in English--find some materials, allow them to discuss the theme in their own language, diagram or--use home language then move into English.

Chants--and chunks of language, a lot of movement, using pictures and images, TPR--Total Physical Response; SPED spectrum, sign language. Motion and use action for vocabulary words.

Connection with students: embedded and modeled during PD--it's not a one size fits all...for example--summer school. K-4. Talk about immigration...butterflies--migration North America to South America. It's at their level.

Some examples that have come up are some texts that had a police officer drive around and help people.

A parent had seen the text and wondered if this is really what we want to share with students in light of everything going on in my district. How the teacher would question the text, question narratives, if the text is true.

Or not having permission to do this with texts. Take on roles. I had really extensive experience with the Children's Theatre company. Exercise of looking at texts--fairytales, myths. Effective with kids and students. With teachers....

We approached Dr. Ghody Mohammed--Practices of Historic Black Literacy. She has studied how these literacy societies--literacy: if you are educated, you are literate. She has this framework with identity: who are these learners?

Great conversations...We combined three schools. There were 80 people on the call. We have opportunities and active steps. Another teacher who has taught for a long time, now we know better. A teacher of color said, we didn't know? We've always known....

Some teachers/people miss the point of Native literature. Conversation with Ida and I--the 7 Grandfather teachings, collaborations between native and non-native literature. Struggle of looking at it through a dominant lens...

A Native lens--strong relationship, connection to place, honoring voices...so sad, awful, resilience...but did you see they overcame this? It's about survival.

I'm having a horse lens moment--name what that was...that was helpful for us. The biggest challenge--the lack of ability to interact with us...State-wide Indian Ed. training online...Online sucks...contact, smudge...super impersonal...lack of funding...trying to jam cultural work into a dominant lens...Standards--Manitoba--cultural standards...here we don't...the biggest thing is teachers at Anishinabe...you are asking me to create a second curriculum...They didn't understand that you would help with a lot of the classroom issues. Inconsistent...multi-faceted octopus being stuffed into a bag. We won people over...we worked really hard with a coach--then she moved to another school...we never felt like we could get beyond Indians 101.

Ed. training online...Online sucks...contact, smudge...super impersonal...lack of funding...trying to jam cultural work into a dominant

On my dream list--Montana has Indian Education for all. MN needs to step up and make that happen.

That would be helpful for teachers, you can revisit knowledge and keep learning and revisiting, Native Culture isn't arts and crafts--there are significant teachings.

The next two themes that came up the most in the elite interviews were adult mindsets and building teacher curiosity. Both of these themes came up twelve times during the elite interviews. Table 4.15 summarizes the elite interview comments about the importance of adult learning.

Table 4.15 Adult Learning and Mindsets, Teacher Experience/Background Knowledge

Adult Learning and Mindsets, Teacher Experience/Background Knowledge

<p>Adult learning--relevant to them--they are not blank slates--something tangible that they can apply right away.</p>
<p>Trying to surmise where people are coming from, have they heard this before? Focus on the PD being meaningful *Not a lot of pre-work or going in “cold.” We have done...xyz, IDI for example</p>
<p>Personal and professional experience & Mindset Student & Professional Development English as a second language.</p>
<p>Related to my own experiences, teacher and a student</p>
<p>People's biases, mindsets, thinking that I want to convince them to do something that I'm already doing.</p>
<p>Teacher reflection is so important. See how that impacts our students. Mindsets changing...</p>
<p>I think it's to shift or move mindsets about what, how teachers...I can talk about how a teacher should do.</p>
<p>I think it's a struggle and the biggest challenges are resistance, oblivion--another example is we had a principal meeting. We worked with our Indian Education department and a Native parent--panel with parents and students. K and 2nd grade at her house for learning. A text was shared with the 2nd grader about immigration--all these people immigrated--that was our population. There was no mention of Native people...</p> <p>Some teachers are oblivious--it didn't occur to this teacher (or they didn't pre-read it), that was a really absent narrative. Or they are really trying, or they don't always get it right...how do you have the skills and the tools. It's messy...Quote for PD--you never swim in the same river twice...</p>
<p>It's not accurate--what's presented as informational text is often wrong...</p>
<p>In terms of power and privilege, they know this, they feel this and see this...it's a different conversation. Because they know this. It's in their memory. How do we turn this around--look at the hope and resilience. It's a different way of changing this...</p>

It can be a dominant narrative, our students recognize power and privilege...here is something I can be proud of. That's hard...how do you know if people are getting it.

Really hard to see changes in mindset--literally trying to have people change their lens. One of hre lessons that Ida and I did was asking people to perceive animals...bird, cat, horse...horse analogy--How the horse sees the world--it doesn't see in front--only the sides. Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it's not there...

Building on to the importance of adult learning, the elite interviews surfaced that supporting teacher reflection is extremely important. This was validated by the teacher focus groups and interviews as well. Table 4.16 summarizes teacher reflection.

Table 4.16 Building Teacher Curiosity/Reflection and Relationships and Dialogue Reflection

Building Teacher Curiosity/Reflection and Relationships and Dialogue Reflection
Reflect and think about racial and intersectionality
Personal reflection is important.
Practice and apply the learning and an opportunity for teachers in smaller groups to share their practices. It's a snowball effect; large/small groups--learning from each other...
Having teachers reflect and that is a gain--it can only come from students.
To have teachers reflect and also move in their practice and adjusting their practice. To think about their own learning.
I would back up to what I just told you, that dialogue between classroom teachers. Nothing that I could have done could replicate that...
Jumping over to teachers, it's in the first response about the police book. It's really about the students having the automaticity to not just read something and take it at face value. I think the biggest thing is not just what they think, but it's who does it benefit?
An immersive cultural experience for teachers. We would just kind of wing it...it was what we felt...

Hoping to build curiosity--teachers and educators to think, I haven't thought about this before.

Building relationships, connections between educator to educator. Educator to community expert or just community/family.

Always relationship and building a network. Building a foundation of how things can be different. When I was in college--students come as an empty vessel, Native folks don't think of folks as an empty vessel, I'll be able to impart all of my knowledge on them...conversations with teachers, you have to give them an opportunity to share their lived experience. That was really hard--moving towards facilitator, vs. teacher...it's really hard.

The next theme that came up in the elite interviews was the importance of culturally relevant and critical literacy tools and protocols. Table 4.17 summarizes the findings from these interviews.

Table 4.17 Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frame

Culturally Relevant and Critical Literacy Tools and Strategies and Critical Literacy Frame

Over the summer I developed DEI Diversity, Equity, Inclusion--inundated with materials, pulled it all together. Recommended...too good to keep to myself

Books/articles, podcasts, PD, webinars, virtual PD options--centered around race and culturally relevant teaching.

Tools--IDI Intercultural Developmental Inventory--commonalities and differences.

Cultural Adaptability

Graphic Organizers--Identity maps--name, identities...reflective questions... mirror or adapt

Social Identities profile...matrix grid

Agent or a target

One tool is--Looking at your own Racial Autobiography

Framing--having the questions posed and having choice

Reflective--name and identify starting

Workshop next week: scanned in reading--prepped and prepared. One pager, skim and peruse...bring the sheet to talk in the break out sessions.

Critical Literacy protocol, when I do the work with teachers, I have tried to include strategies--more inclusive--related to language.

Yes, I wish there were protocols, but I have used many strategies.

Strategies: How to be inclusive, translanguaging: The use of your own repertoire, then transferring that to another language-vocabulary, scaffolding vocabulary.

How do students do this with students? With my science background, but in Physics--some of the concepts damaged the Earth. Or the arts, the perspectives, it applies everywhere.

I would be happy to share my district's critical literacy protocol, in conjunction with the Minneapolis Children's Theatre company. One thing that we did with the Neighborhood Bridges Program--generally narratives, fairy tales, our colleague who is Somali shared her stories. Then what the kids did was they had these theatre groups.

They might have been given a part of the story, they would create an alternate ending or scenario. Then that whole perspective--you are the trees, can you act that out...what if the trees took over the narrative--you are the American Indians. Using drama and talking--getting kids to talk...each group knew where to go. The conversations kids had--we have 15 minutes--it was an amazing tool! You just changed that narrative. That's how we wanted to share that.

Jack Zipes--book, he actually mentions me in the book. He mentions me in this book. Maria Asp--from the Children's Theatre. She would be awesome, she might be able to put you in touch with Jack. It's called Creative Storytelling...out of Italy.

The other tool is the PD that we did that framework with Dr. Gholdy Mohammed--we put the unit essential question--then the 4 quadrants--identity, skills, criticality and had teachers fill in and brainstorm what they could do to enter into that.

Cultural standards for all, more rigorous teacher education, Native Studies 101, 110, some teachers have never heard of boarding schools, wow...we could do this amazing lofty goal. We are still trying to counteract, barely knowing anything about having some competencies.

U of M tools that we use, the U IEP, created by the U of M, Dr. Jennifer McKomis, she and Ida created it...what has the U of M been doing? Animosity towards the Native medicine garden, I don't know about the relationship, has it changed...medicine garden.

It's hard, all of these invisible webs, what still works today.

We used Grandfather teachings: Lots of people retired and left, toxic environment. I'm not sure what they do. There are still some Grandfather teaching tools. Many of the X School teachers may use this. Dakota and Lakota--it was pretty. Those are the only ones that I think about in terms of ones that I've used.

Tools--it takes so much elder knowledge--middle person/bridge. It takes so much to share--someone turns it into a program that you have to buy, or it's appropriated in ways that aren't used appropriately.

How do you show love? It's a great way to create anchor charts--they would have to understand this first...

It requires you to run this through what you know first--higher order, higher level thinking...honesty is key...

Modeling for teachers and learning through discomfort came up as the next theme that was important in the elite interviews. Table 4.18 summarizes these insights.

Table 4.18 Modeling for Teachers and Practice and Application Learning Through Discomfort

Modeling for Teachers and Practice and Application Learning Through Discomfort

<p>There are several ways to model for teachers: through PD, practice. This works for new or veteran teachers and they can bring current lesson plans/units...and we can model this together. CRT lesson/unit and bring their own work.</p>
<p>Strategies--develop and grow over time.</p>
<p>Authentic--I've read research, but it's something I've lived every day and more authentic.</p>
<p>I think again, thinking about their lived experience.</p>
<p>Learning through discomfort... Sacred sites--Jim Rock--U of M Duluth. Standard elder--he has props, he's talking...no one knew what he was talking about...took me a long time. FB--I didn't understand, not structured enough...funny--same complaints</p>
<p>Learning through discomfort... Ethan--Dakota leader, younger--worked at Osseo, very black and white--he will talk about exactly...what he thought...we liked to make people uncomfortable...un-nerve them...smudge--food, tour, 7 Grandfather teaching, experiential education, re-format the way that teaching would look like...</p>

In addition to modeling for teachers one of the themes that emerged was qualitative vs. quantitative & difficult to measure; impact on teachers as a theme. During the elite interviews, there were several comments about the difficulty of measuring qualitative data. Table 4.19 summarizes the comments.

Table 4.19 Qualitative vs. Quantitative and Survey Data and Difficult to Measure; Individual Impact on Teachers

<p>Qualitative vs. Quantitative and Survey Data and Difficult to Measure; Individual Impact on Teachers</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aguilar's work--do we say what we are, or do we do what we say.... ● Not always easy to see this through the end...

- Qualitative/Quantitative
- Tools--IDI, self-reporting assessments
- Numbers and the stories
- Public institutions--academic data...
- Sticking to the plan--lack of alignment and accountability.

Tough question--it's hard to measure it. Your hope is that you are trying to advocate. It's up to each individual. I have seen most teachers agree... Going into classrooms to see before and after.

So, I think we would also gather staff and facilitator feedback about the whole process. We had 12-15 groups. We had about 30 facilitators. Some feedback is that there were a couple of videos that were very bold. They didn't follow through because it didn't work.

Survey data, PD--Look at what teachers want to learn, influence work in the future, U IEP data, and through the MOA--pull students--ask them if teachers care about them. When we did recognition events--survey parents. Is there someone you want to acknowledge?

Student themes from elite interviews: In the elite interviews the student themes begin with student voice and student opinion about their experience in school and tools that capture student voices and opinion. Table 4.20 shows the comments related to this section.

Table 4.20 Student Voice and Student Opinion About Their Experience in School and Tools that Capture Student Voices and Opinion

Student Voice and Student Opinion About Their Experience in School and Tools that Capture Student Voices and Opinion

We hear from students of color--I don't feel valued, but this doesn't change...

To ask their students if it's making a difference--changes in their practice. It would be really interesting to hear their voices.

Survey for example. If they are willing to do this...It could be subjective, not black and white. Getting student feedback. That is a way to hear from teachers.
The impact is the student voices.
Through one of my classes for the U of M--Multi-national literacies. I did my project on "Student Voices." I interviewed 6 students in K-8th grade. All students of color---themes.
Identity, most of them felt that they had to be someone else when they entered the classroom. When their teacher would ask about things like vacation--they felt left out, or they didn't see themselves. They didn't feel comfortable speaking their native language.

The next section has two short sections about student input; Table 4.21 student work and examples and transfer learning to Table 4.22 students seeing themselves: windows and mirrors. The importance of student work and how the professional development transfers to student learning is an important goal for this work.

Table 4.21 Student Work & Examples and Transfer Learning to Students

Student Work and Examples and Transfer Learning to Students
If my examples don't work--showing student data, student examples.. Might not work on others.
When you talk about police, how you will talk about this with different students--what are the writing skills, Criticality, How can you be critical. Intellect--what will you learn about yourself and others. Criticality of transfer--we framed looking at the essential questions of unit 1.

Table 4.22 Students Seeing Themselves: Windows and Mirrors

Students Seeing Themselves: Windows and Mirrors
Students for the students who are being instructed--windows and mirrors.
Windows of lives that are very different than ours... make new connections.

Based on the data, one of the most important discoveries that has arisen from this project is the need to create a student survey to analyze how students are feeling about the relevance of their classroom experiences. In both the elite interviews and the teacher focus groups/interviews this was expressed by participants. One of the elite interview participants said,... “to ask their students if it’s making a difference--changes in their practice. It would be really interesting to hear their voices.” In addition, other elite interviewees stated, it would be helpful to have a “survey for example. If they are willing to do this...It could be subjective, not black and white. Getting student feedback. That is a way to hear from teachers.” Another participant said, “the impact is the student voices.”

One of the teacher interviewees said, “It would be great to give students a survey to give teachers feedback on how well they did create equity.” As I reflect on these responses, it brings me back to the essential goals in education; who do we exist to serve as educators?

Discarded Categories and Subcategories. Throughout the coding process, there were some codes that did not have substantial responses in the teacher focus groups/interviews and the elite interviews. These codes were set aside as they did not contribute substantially to this project. These codes are listed in Table 4.25.

Table 4.23 Discarded Codes

Discarded Codes from Teacher Focus Groups & Interviews and Elite Interviews:	Number of responses
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Organizational commitment to CRT & Gather feedback from teachers & Teacher observations.	2
Cognitive dissonance & transfer or knowledge.	2
Negative experiences	2
Healthy work environment & Shared norms	2
Relating to personal experiences & Integrating perspectives & Storytelling & Immersive cultural experience	2
Resistance (adult learners) & priorities (leadership)	2
Narrow focus & using evidence	2
Asset based vs. deficit mindset	1

Interpretation of Data Findings on the Research Questions

The data found in this case study support the importance of professional development on culturally relevant and critical literacy. The first research question, How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers was addressed in focus groups and interviews with teachers. The second question, What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? In both the focus groups, teacher interviews and the elite

interviews there was evidence that shows that having opportunities to learn and dialogue with peers is important for both their practice and the impact on their mindset. Teachers in the focus groups shared that multicultural texts are important as well as opportunities for collaboration and discussion after learning new concepts. Tools and protocols are important, but the overarching finding was that having time for reflection and interaction with colleagues is the most important aspect of professional development and change in teacher mindset and practices. The literature review supports these findings regarding professional development. Reflection and application are essential elements of professional development, and this applies to this case study.

Discussion of the Data

This chapter focused on data analysis from the focus groups, teacher interviews and elite interviews. Teacher quotes and elite interview quotes are shared based on the coding topics. These quotes and tables with the number of responses helped the researcher analyze and answer the research questions to explore the research questions: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? The second research question is: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? The impact of professional development on teachers surfaced in two overarching themes; through adult learning and in the importance of focusing on student voice and student needs. Having the opportunity to reflect and learn from professional development takes time for implementation and to shift mindsets. The input from the teacher focus groups and

interviews shows that mindsets can be changed, but teachers were clear that they need time to process and collaborate with colleagues to make these shifts meaningful.

One of the overall goals of professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching and critical literacy is providing teachers the time and space to reflect and dialogue with their peers. This theme of time and reflection came up in multiple teacher comments during the focus groups and interviews. One teacher said,

I am inspired by the training to learn more. My biggest take away was to learn more. Connect with other staff and learn more about the school community, going in with a beginners approach. Next step--practical, learning from the community. How my class fits in and trying to figure out ways to learn about the community.

Another teacher spoke of the hard work it takes to shift mindsets and practices. This teacher said,

I think that we are all in different places on our journey. I'm very passionate about coaching--*Coaching for Equity* by Elena Aguilar. Such a challenge is that we are all in different places on that trajectory. We have different backgrounds--this makes it harder to utilize CRT. How can I do this tomorrow--not just a box. It's a mindset I'm trying to tackle, get dirty, ask questions, let's ask, research. It takes more work, than just picking up a curriculum guide. These are two big challenges.

Another teacher spoke of the importance of tools, but also agreed that having time to reflect is essential. They said,

Regarding tools: books/ critical literacy protocol (Appendix C: Culturally Relevant Literacy Protocol), I'm just saying it's harder to keep it at the forefront. More condensed and not get lost in a whole other PD. I just want to focus on one thing at a time. The best tools are getting time to work with colleagues. Break out sessions and time to talk and help each other...

The importance of taking small, measurable steps was brought up by one teacher. They said, "It also can be challenging...the conversations can lead to ...we'll keep trying these things...politically and historically. Avoiding defeatism...leadership can help to combat that. Achievable objectives." Another teacher noted the importance of taking small steps as well,

I think the challenges are that we all come from different places. We present what we are changing and transforming. I find it challenging. Time to process it, and get with your team and on your own, what you are going to do. All of this transformation is pushed and how to do the nuts and bolts. It's a longer journey, but it's more than that. Sometimes it's a bit too much. One focus at a time. Just like we try to meet kids, we need to meet teachers...It's exciting and I like change. I'm excited about presenting things--it's not as easy when you sit there for half a day, then give time and space to do things. Language/tools. Whole big pictures...

By having one focus at a time, these teachers were emphatic that there is a greater sense of change and movement in their teaching when they can make changes in

incremental doses with the support of their colleagues. This came up in another teacher response. They said,

Well, I think that I will continue to have the conversations. Having one focus, having time to implement and reflect. People are in different places, it's okay to push the envelope. I was in a PD, I thought we were done with that...I was surprised. That's why we need to get together, it's hard for researchers and Admin to do this work. Smaller doses and time to reflect. How have we done and come back? Do a link, then the teachers go away and they have to plan. Smaller doses and a game plan--I can statements. Talking in smaller groups and planning teams--there is so much focus on online teaching. I appreciate the reminders, accountability with smaller teams. We are trying to do that--keeping us more on that focus.

As a researcher, I have learned that the importance of taking time to reflect and provide time for collaboration among teachers is an essential step. It's a goal and a challenge for many school districts. In the United States we have a challenge in finding and creating time for this deep learning and collaboration. Darling-Hammond (2010) makes a case for school leaders to create this time for teachers.

Finally, the quality of school leaders is critical to recruiting and retaining teachers, as the principal's ability to organize a productive environment, access resources, buffer the school from outside distractions, motivate adults, and support their learning is critical to teacher's satisfaction and efficacy (p. 110).

The key findings from this research include:

- Allowing time for teacher reflection and collaboration with peers to apply their learning.
- Allowing for diverse perspectives in curriculum and allowing windows and mirrors for students.
- Providing tools and resources, with the time for reflection, modeling and time to apply their learning.

This chapter has been an examination of the data collected in this case study dissertation and has provided data to answer my two research questions. The first research question, How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers was addressed in focus groups and interviews with teachers. The second question, What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? The next chapter will be a conclusion of this dissertation as well as implications and potential next steps for future research and application.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This qualitative, case study dissertation research incorporated data from teacher focus groups and interviews, elite interviews and document analysis to explore the research questions: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? The second research question is: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders?

This final chapter focuses on the implications of my research as well as the limitations of my study. I included potential next steps for research and additional ideas for further research and concluding thoughts.

Connections to Literature

As discussed in chapter 2, there are three key topics described in the literature review: Professional Development Best Practices, Culturally Responsive Teaching

Practices and Critical Literacy. The questions in the elite interviews, teacher focus groups and teacher interviews drew from the literature review and analyzing an initial professional development survey completed by research participants. The teacher interviews, teacher focus groups and elite interviews provided compelling insights for reflection. Several teachers were influenced by the culturally relevant professional development. One teacher responded,

I am inspired by the training to learn more. My biggest takeaway was to learn more. Connect with other staff and learn more about the school community, going in with a beginners approach. Next step--practical, learning from the community. How my class fits in and trying to figure out ways to learn about the community.

Regarding the goal of *changing teacher mindset*, one teacher responded,

The (PD) inspired me so greatly to write a capstone at Hamline--on CRT within a Montessori learning environment. I did a lot of research. It was a great opportunity to learn about Montessori and also Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT), be more explicit about that and being more Montessori, she was brilliant and a scientific mind. CRT is also about that...I learned through my research. High expectations is one of the most important ideas behind this. Giving them the support they need to reach those.”

Darling-Hammond shares strong research findings that make a case for more collaboration and reflection for teachers. She cites the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) and shares key findings that support the plea for additional time and

reflection among teachers regarding professional growth and development. “NELS found that schools that had restructured to personalize education and develop collaborative learning structures produced significantly higher achievement gains that were also more equitably distributed.” These practices included:

- Creating small units within schools
- Keeping students together over multiple years
- Forming teaching teams that share students and plan together
- Ensuring common planning time for teachers
- Involving staff in school wide problem solving
- Involving parents in their children’s education
- Fostering cooperative learning

(Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 239)

The NELS study (listed above) supports the research in this dissertation case study. Several of the practices that are cited align with the comments that teachers shared in the focus groups and interviews. The literature was supported by the research in this case study. As documented in chapter 4, many teachers found value in time to collaborate with colleagues and to reflect on their learning.

When asked about *ways to make changes to impact schools being more culturally relevant*, some of the comments that emerged were: “The dream would be--structural changes, smaller classes, speakers, go into the community--see community experts, hire staff that represents diverse life experiences...beyond our planning and instructional...”

This structural change is an important aspect in this research; it's an area of focus that I would like to explore as a researcher and as an educator.

In addition to having time to reflect and structural changes, teachers also shared the importance of having a wide variety of literature to share with students to act as windows and mirrors. This speaks directly to my second research question, What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? Teachers shared that they needed time for reflection as well as the tools to create a critical literacy structure for their students. One teacher shared,

I would agree, children's literature, multicultural, we have an incredible library with a lot of resources...Sometimes they don't know where to look...I try to direct them to the books. Give students an equity of voice. In classrooms. Mainstream classroom, raise their hands, attempt to answer the questions. They may be intimidated. Trying to get students to have a voice. Comfortable--getting them to share.

It will be interesting to share this information with the facilitators in the future to see if this would be surprising or if it would confirm their goals in facilitation of adult learning with teachers moving forward. In reading this at a later date, I'm reminded of the importance of both subjective and objective data analysis. I had my own hypothesis as a researcher and facilitator of professional development. However, when looking at the numerical patterns that emerged, it is more evident that the themes that emerged have

significant weight and value for culturally relevant and critical literacy professional development.

Implications of the Findings. In looking at the implications, it's important to restate the research questions for this dissertation. The first research question, How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers was addressed in focus groups and interviews with teachers. The second question, What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? Based on the teacher interviews and focus groups three main themes became apparent that align with the literature review.

- Related to professional development, the main theme that arose from the teacher interviews and focus groups was the *opportunity for reflection and dialogue with peers*.
- Concerning culturally relevant teaching practices, the topic of *student voice* emerged. Having equity of voice in their classroom among peers and with their teacher.
- Related to critical literacy several teachers voiced the *importance of having diverse literature* and allowing students to see themselves in the literature and curriculum, as well as learn about other cultures.

These various themes lead into the theoretical assumptions that inform this research.

How does culturally relevant teaching become affirming in education? We have discussed culture as being responsive/relevant (Gay 2002, Ladson Billings, 1992 &

1995). Chapter 2 explored the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2017), but there seems to be an additional area for future study; *culturally affirming systems*. Culturally affirming systems allows both educators and students to affirm their own identities and affirm that there are differences. This embraces the concept of windows and mirrors and listening to student voices and the dialogue between both teachers and students.

Based on the data gathered in this case study, one of the most important findings in this dissertation is the need to create a student survey to analyze how students are feeling about the relevance of their classroom experiences. In both the elite interviews and the teacher focus groups and teacher interviews this was expressed by participants. One of the elite interview participants said, "...to ask their students if it's making a difference--changes in their practice. It would be really interesting to hear their voices." In addition, other elite interviewees stated, it would be helpful to have a "survey for example. If they are willing to do this...It could be subjective, not black and white. Getting student feedback. That is a way to hear from teachers." Another participant said, "the impact is the student voices."

One of the teacher interviewees said, "It would be great to give students a survey to give teachers feedback on how well they did create equity." As I reflect on these responses, it brings me back to the essential goals in education; who do we exist to serve as educators? This is one of the most important findings from my research; the suggestion that there should be more student voice in schools. Several teachers suggested that they wished there was a survey to help them gauge if their teaching is meeting some

of the goals of cultural relevance. Based on this feedback, I designed an upper grades student survey to elicit student voice and input (See Appendix E: Upper Grades Student Survey, Culturally Relevant Teaching Environment).

I also developed a K-2 student survey to gain insights from primary age students (Appendix F: Kindergarten-Second Grade Student Survey, Culturally Relevant Teaching Environment) The goal of these surveys is to ask students how the classroom environment feels related to culturally relevant instruction.

As a researcher and educator, I'm excited to share these student surveys, as I hope that it will be used, modified and edited to fit the needs of teachers and school districts to engage student voices. At the heart of culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy, student voice is central to this work. It is what I call culturally affirming teaching and culturally affirming systems. Structures are an essential part of educational systems. As Peter Senge stated in 1990,

In schools where systems thinking is woven throughout the curriculum, and students and teachers work together as learners and mentors rather than passive listeners and all-knowing experts, these innate skills can truly flower. If we can succeed in moving toward a learner-centered, systems-based education system, I believe we will see just how readily systems citizenship develops and how ineffective the traditional classroom, teacher-centric model of learning actually is (p. 361)

Over time there have been systems that have supported white dominant culture; if we hope to shift this to move towards culturally affirming systems, it must happen at

multiple levels: district level, building leadership, classrooms & teachers and the ways in which families and students engage in a school community. Becoming a culturally affirming school system will not happen overnight, however it can happen if educators are willing to make incremental changes. As Djanjo Paris stated in 2017,

“...CSP (culturally sustaining pedagogy) is an especially necessary framework for educators who seek social justice for their students of color, whose sense of self is constantly under attack from schooling practices and policies that racialize and thereby devalue, distort, and erase their language, culture and identity” (p. 45).

The information gathered from the teacher focus groups and elite interviews will guide future professional development for the researcher and other interested parties who read this dissertation. The goal of this dissertation is to find the most effective ways to share professional development and resources focused on culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy strategies.

Theoretical Assumptions

Reflecting on the teacher focus groups and interviews as well as the elite interviews there are some important theoretical assumptions that have emerged.

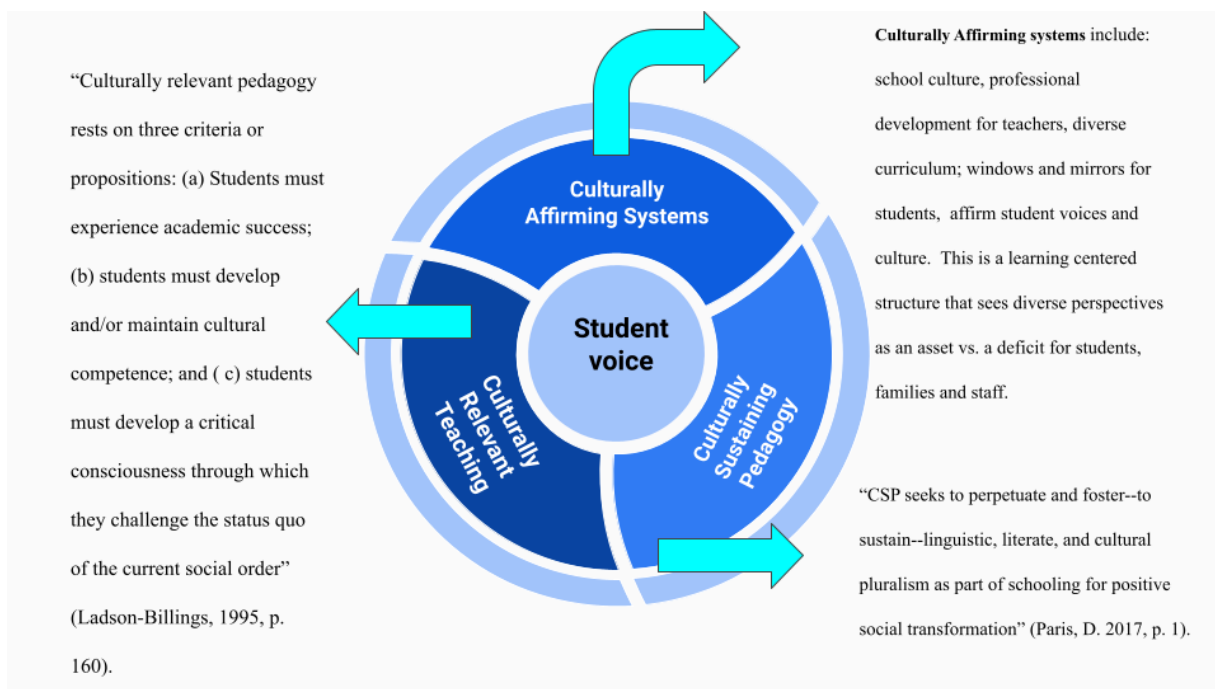
- In order to support culturally affirming classrooms teachers must allow for diverse literature and student voices to be heard.
- During and after professional development, teachers must have the opportunity for application, reflection, and time to dialogue with peers.

In order for this to happen, there must be a systemic shift in schools and in our society.

Educators must be committed to affirming culture and viewing diverse backgrounds as an

asset, versus a deficit. As Djanjo Paris reminded us in 2017, “As deficit discourses continue to circulate and escalate, the dignity and humanity of youth of color are under constant assault in the U.S. public sphere” (p. 55). Based on the research in this case study, it is up to us as leaders and educators to shift to a culturally affirming system in our schools and in our communities. We must see differences in culture, language and backgrounds as an asset in which we can learn about the world and ourselves. As Gholdy Muhammad shared in 2020, “Responsive Literacy is a dynamic change for our students of color to provide them the education to which they are entitled. This change will result in the elevation and transformation of education” (p. 169). By creating a culturally affirming system, we can create opportunities in education for students to see themselves and learn about the world as they engage in learning. This type of affirmation is a system of education which will make dramatic changes for our children. I created a graphic representation to address my own thinking and the research that supports this work. See figure 5.1 for a visual representation of how culturally affirming systems supports both culturally relevant teaching and culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Figure 5.1 Culturally Affirming Systems



Culturally Affirming Systems build on the foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy.

- *Culturally Affirming Systems* are inclusive of school culture, professional development for teachers, diverse curriculum; windows and mirrors for students and an opportunity to affirm student voices and culture. A culturally affirming system is a learning centered structure that sees diverse perspectives as an asset versus a deficit for students, families and staff.
- *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy*: “CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster--to sustain--linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation” (Paris, 2017, p. 1).
- *Culturally Relevant Teaching*: “Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three

criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160).

Limitations of the study. One of the challenges of this study was the timing; the research portion of this study took place in the middle of a global pandemic. COVID 19 imposed several limitations on gathering in person and impacted schools in dramatic ways. Teachers were navigating distance learning and learning about new structures of teaching (Google Classroom, SeeSaw and teaching via Google Meets) when I was recruiting focus groups and teacher interview participants. Despite these limitations, the teachers who participated had insightful comments and were extremely supportive of this project. The main impact of the pandemic was on the scope of the teachers participating. Despite the smaller sample size in the research, the teachers who participated and the elite interviews offered valuable insights which can guide future practice and research in this field.

Gaps in the data. In addition to the timing, there were fewer participants than there could have been. The COVID 19 pandemic certainly contributed to the capacity and time for teacher participants. Several teachers who originally agreed to participate said they simply could not do one more thing in addition to planning for distant learning, hybrid learning and new teaching platforms (SeeSaw, Google Classroom and teaching remotely). Despite these gaps, the data collected provides important insights and considerations for future professional development related to culturally relevant teaching

and critical literacy practices. In addition to the size of the sample population the races and gender of the teachers was not as diverse as I would have hoped for in this study. However, the teaching population is reflective of the average teacher population in Minnesota. According to a report from the MDE report, 2019 Biennial Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand, 95.7% of teachers are white and 75.8% are female.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on my findings, I have several recommendations for future research. This is focused on the different stakeholders that are impacted by this research.

Expanding the study. I would start with a larger scale survey of teachers and a larger scale of professional development facilitators. A larger study would provide additional perspectives and could help deepen this research.

Students. Students are at the heart of this research and I believe that this research could be strengthened by informal and formal surveys. Asking students about what is working and is not working in their education is vital. Offering students an opportunity to provide voice in their own learning is a way of honoring their insights and needs as learners. I shared some sample student surveys that could be used or modified by school districts.(Appendix D: Upper Grades Student Survey, Culturally Relevant Teaching Environment and Appendix E: Kindergarten-Second Grade Student Survey, Culturally Relevant).

Families and community. This research could also be extended to include family perspectives on how relevant the instruction is for their children. There could also be

additional research focused on how to engage families and include them in the school community.

Teachers. This research could also be expanded to include more teacher voices and their perspectives on the impact of professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy practices. Future research could be focused on different grade bands to go deeper into the nuances of different grade levels and developmental expectations for their students.

School Leaders. As an elementary school principal, I believe that this research is important to other school leaders in their planning. The importance of providing time for reflection, collaboration and time for application of new learning is essential. The challenges of limited time for professional development, collaboration and teaming is a challenge in the United States. As we learned in chapter 2, Darling-Hammond (2010) compared the United States to other countries, and we are behind in the time that we provide for professional development, prepping and planning. Despite these challenges, school leaders need to think creatively about the time they do have with teachers. A few ideas include:

- Utilize staff meetings for professional development and learning (Logistics can be emailed or placed in a memo)
- Provide teachers consistent time for collaboration with peers (PLCs, team planning, common preparation time, creative ways to allow for planning).
- Utilize feedback loops to get input from teachers on what they are learning and their needs.

- Stay focused on a few key goals for your school and go deep with this learning.

School District Administration. This research offers several important suggestions for school districts. Culturally sustaining systems need to be all encompassing and must include all levels of a school district; students, teachers, school leaders, district leaders, school board members and the community.

- Ensure that school district learning is focused on racial equity work. Within this framework, focus on culturally relevant teaching practices and critical literacy.
- Ensure that all levels of a school district engage in racial equity work; implicit bias work, cultural identity work, and culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy practices.
- Work with unions creatively to carve out time in the school calendar for quality professional development days that are spaced out throughout the year (this allows for reflection, implementation and continuous improvement).
- Allow teachers and school leaders to have time for collaboration, reflection and learning.

Student voices are the most important next step in this research. All of the work that teachers, researchers and facilitators are doing should be on their behalf. Students are the center of education; however their thoughts and insights are often not included in this work. My own research limitations were a barrier in this regard, but this seems to be the most pressing next step in this research.

Concluding Thoughts

In 2017, Django Paris spoke of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). He states: CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster--to sustain--linguistic, literate and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation. CSP positions dynamic cultural 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 (p. 1)

The research in this dissertation builds on this concept, in addition to culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy we must seek to create culturally affirming systems in which students' cultures are valued, celebrated and affirmed through curriculum, literature, classroom dynamics and through school and community support. By creating culturally affirming systems, we can meet students' needs, listen to their voices and affirm their identities in multiple ways. In addition, this means affirming a family's needs and their insights and cultures.

In addressing my research questions: How does professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers? As well as the second question: What are the elements of effective professional development on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy as identified by teachers and leaders? There are several findings from this albeit limited case study; professional development can influence the perceptions and mindsets of teachers in regard to culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy. What I've learned through this research is that it is important to provide teachers with the time, application, reflection and space

to engage in this work. I initially thought it was the tools and protocols that were most effective, but based on input from teachers, reflection and dialogue with peers is equally important if not more effective than tools and strategies.

Offering teachers and students diverse texts and opportunities to discuss multiple points of view is essential to both culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy. Using texts to unpack multiple perspectives and examine systems of oppression is an important next step. Author, Gholdy Mohammed, 2020 defines criticality as “the capacity to read, write and think in ways of understanding power, privilege, social justice, and oppression, particularly for populations who have been historically marginalized in the world” (p. 120). This idea of criticality expands on the concepts of critical literacy shared in chapter 2, she helps bring this concept into our current cultural time-frame. This dissertation aligns with Muhammad’s (2020) vision, one teacher stated “What I’ve realized is literacy is culturally defined. What I have associated as literacy all of my life. That’s not what my students always think of as literacy. The questions being asked can be biased as well. Much deeper...” In defining literacy based on student needs and outlooks, is not only culturally relevant, but it is culturally affirming. It is honoring students' voices and outlook, it is acknowledging their cultural identities. In reflecting on the literature, data collected and the observations from this case study, the goals of this research point to the importance of using literacy as a tool for freedom. Muhammed (2020) goes on to say, “Historically Responsive Literacy is a dynamic change for our students of color to provide them the education to which they are entitled. This change will result in the elevation and transformation of education” (p. 169). That is the goal of this research, to

impart change and to make a case for transformative education. As Ladson-Billings (1995) wisely says, “We teach what we value” and that is the importance of this research project. Creating culturally affirming systems allows for authentic culturally relevant teaching environments and opportunities for critical literacy for students. As one teacher emphatically stated, “The dream would be--structural changes, smaller classes, speakers, go into the community--see community experts, hire staff that represents diverse life experiences...beyond our planning and instructional tools...” This teacher envisions a systems change in our schools that promote culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy.

As I shared during the introduction, this research is personal because education is not only my profession, it is my passion in life. I believe that as a school leader and advocate for social justice, we must do better for our students. They deserve culturally affirming systems from the moment they enter early education throughout their school careers. To create a culturally affirming system, we must create change for our students. One of the major findings in this dissertation is that professional development can offer a starting point for this type of change, by allowing teachers tools and opportunities for reflection, there is an opportunity to change teacher mindsets and allow for this type of systemic change. As the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “It is not possible to be in favor of justice for some people and not be in favor of justice for all people.” This dissertation urges educators to become advocates for all students and to work for a change to create culturally affirming systems in education. It is this type of change that is my hope and dream for this dissertation.

APPENDIX

Appendix A, Questions for Elite Interviews of District Leaders

Questions for Elite Interviews of District Leaders

I would like to ask you some questions as a professional development creator and facilitator. I will be recording our conversation and transcribing your answers. Thank you in advance for your time and insights.

1. What are your intended outcomes when you are **delivering** professional development on culturally relevant teacher professional development?
2. What are the most effective ways to share information about critical literacy?
3. What are some of the challenges you anticipate when planning for culturally relevant and/or critical literacy professional development?
 - Please give examples of strategies that have been successful in moving through these challenges?
4. Noting that culturally relevant teaching is adaptive work (vs. technical), how do you measure outcomes for culturally relevant professional development?
5. What are some of your hopes when providing professional development related to culturally relevant and/or critical literacy instruction?
6. Are there any tools or protocols that you have shared with teachers that you would like to share? Also, are there any tools/protocols that you have not used, but wish existed?
7. Do you have any other comments related to culturally relevant and/or critical literacy that you would like to share for this case study?

Appendix B, Questions for Teacher focus groups

Interview questions for teacher focus group participants:

All of the questions are focused on culturally relevant teaching and critical literacy professional development that you have been a part of, all of the questions will be focused on these topics.

*This will be noted as **CRT**, Culturally Relevant Teaching and **CL**, Critical Literacy.

1. What have you found the most helpful way to learn about culturally relevant teaching practices?
2. What are the most impactful insights you have learned about critical literacy practices?
3. Which tools, protocols and tips have been the most impactful for your planning and teaching?
4. What have you found the most helpful way to learn about culturally relevant teaching practices?
5. What are the most impactful insights you have learned about critical literacy practices?
6. Which tools, protocols and tips have been the most impactful for your planning and teaching?
7. What have been the most influential aspects about the (CRT & CL) professional development you have attended?
8. What are the biggest challenges of the CRT and CL professional development that you have attended?
9. Has the professional development you have received inspired you to learn more on your own about CRT and CL? (Books, professional development, other resources...)
 - Which books, PD, other resources?
10. What other feedback do you have for researchers and people who plan and facilitate professional development focused on CRT and CL?

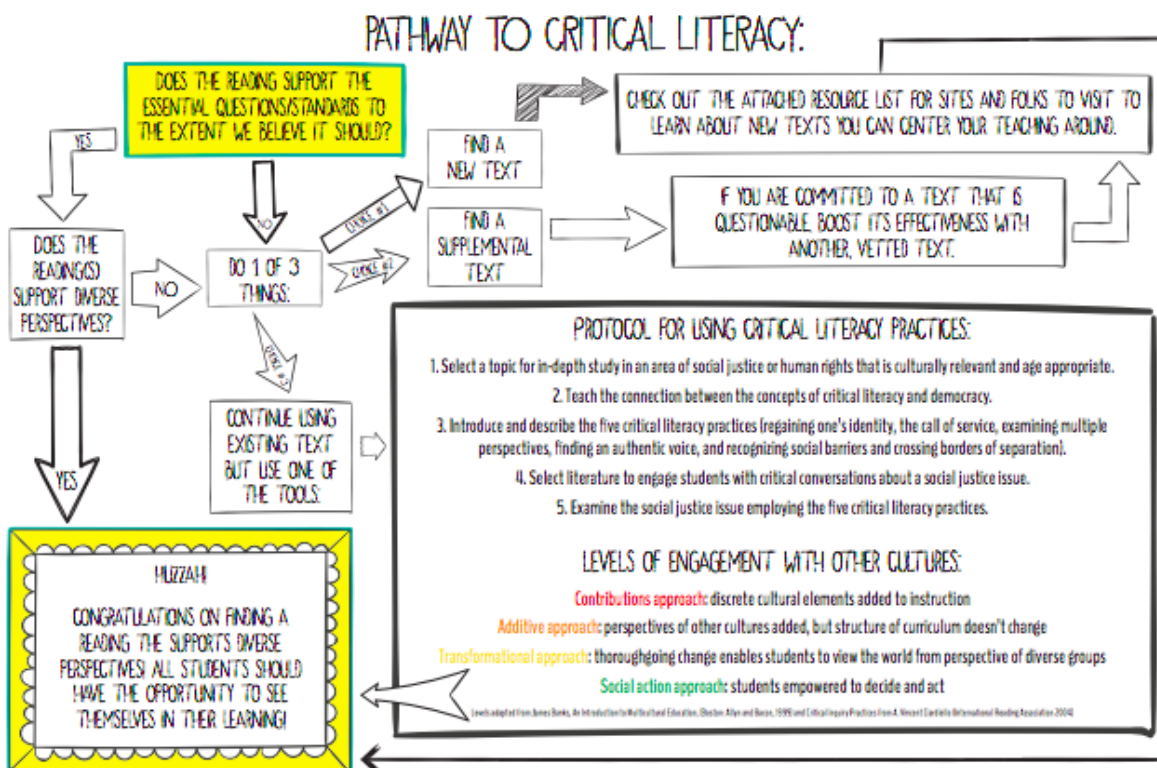
Appendix C: Culturally Relevant Literacy Protocol

Purpose of Protocol	<p>Students that are engaged from a critical perspective, comprehend beyond, under, over and around their previous level of understanding. (Gress, Teaching Critical Literacy). The goal is to empower students to engage in the practices of critical literacy. As instructors we need to provide safe opportunities to practice these skills.</p> <p>Additional Resources: EdChange: Seven Key Characteristics of a Multicultural Education Critical Literacy: Enhancing Students' Comprehension of Text</p>
Activity and Discussion Suggestions	<p>Identify three to four perspectives. In addition to identifying the dominant or main groups, also identify groups whose perspective is marginalized or non-existent in the text/story. Teacher may need to unpack the cultural context of different perspectives for students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is important to that group? ● What kinds of things interest that group? <p>Introduce the concept of perspectives with a discussion about which groups have power and get to make decisions. Example: Who gets to make decisions about your education? Your parents? You? (students) Government?</p> <p>More questions to consider asking about perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What concerns this group the most? ● Are the interests of your group represented? ● Which perspectives did you hear in the story? ● How were they represented (or not represented)? ● What perspectives were left out of or not featured in the story? ● What was left out of the story that was very important to them? ● Did their group get to make the rules/decisions? ● Did their group have power? ● What were some of the differences in the ways that the different groups responded to that story? ● To which group would you want to belong? ● Did your understanding of the story change? ● Who profits? Who suffers? ● Whose values are represented in and omitted from the text? ● What bothers you? ● Who created the text/to what end? What is missing? ● What is the hidden curriculum? What student perspectives do I have in my classroom?

What to do with questionable text.	Ask: Should it be removed, replaced or enriched? Contact staff in Teaching and Learning with your concern.
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Adapted from the Minneapolis Children's Theatre Company

Appendix D: Pathway to Critical Literacy & [Link to Critical Literacy Powerpoint](#)

































Created by Odia Wood-Krueger, Carey Seeley & Corina Pastrana

Appendix E: Upper Grades Student Survey, Culturally Relevant Teaching Environment

Student Survey: Culturally Relevant Teaching Environment (3rd-12th grade)	Response scale 0-never 1-2:sometimes 3-4: often 5: always
Do you feel valued in your classroom?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your teacher ask you and your classmates about their interests and backgrounds?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your teacher read books (or provide books) that have students that look like you?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your teacher facilitate discussions about different perspectives in your classroom?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your teacher ask for your opinion during class discussions?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Do you feel like your point of view matters in your classroom?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your class discuss topics that you think are interesting and engaging?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your class talk about current events and social topics?	0-1-2-3-4-5
When your class studies history, do you hear and discuss multiple perspectives?	0-1-2-3-4-5
Does your teacher ask you if you think the topics you study as a class are interesting?	0-1-2-3-4-5

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Appendix F: Kindergarten-Second Grade Student Survey, Culturally Relevant
Teaching Environment

<p align="center">Student Survey: Culturally Relevant Teaching Environment (K-2)</p> <p align="center">*Questions should be read to students</p>	<p align="center">Rating Scale (Students circle or select online)</p> <p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Do you feel important in your classroom?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Does your teacher ask you about what you like to do and what you care about?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Does your teacher read books that have children that look like you in them?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Does your class talk about different ideas and points of view?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Does your teacher ask what you think?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Do you feel like your ideas matter in your class?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Does your class talk about things happening in the world?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
When you learn about history, do you hear different ideas from different people?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>
Does your teacher ask you if things you learn about are interesting?	<p align="center">  Never  Sometimes  Yes </p>

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