

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PRACTICES WITHIN A SUBURBAN/RURAL SCHOOL
DISTRICT

Evan Hill

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Educational Leadership in the School of Education.

Chapel Hill
2022

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ABSTRACT

Evan Hill: Culturally Relevant Practices Within a Suburban/Rural School District
(Under the direction of Kathleen Brown)

A certain group of students in America's schools are faced with a struggle that prevents them from accessing an empowering form of education. This struggle originates from the question of whom to educate and how to equitably allocate resources (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2010, 2012). While experiencing this struggle may impact all students, it is all too familiar for students of color. Students of color, throughout the country, are receiving unequal access to important resources when compared to their White counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard, 2020). As a result of inequitable access to resources, perceived gaps between students of color and White students have surfaced (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2010, 2012). Recognizing the causes of these gaps will assist in identifying long-standing systemic problems that need to be addressed.

For change to occur in the current system, a number of steps are necessary. To begin, the historical context of what has caused these inequities must be explored and understood. This historical context includes the conditions faced by students of color throughout history as well as the cultural mismatch that is experienced in today's schools. The cultural mismatch may exist due to the largely White, female, and monolingual teaching force not recognizing the funds of knowledge students of color bring to the classroom. The mismatch may also exist as a result of the Eurocentric curriculum that is taught in most schools. Secondly, race and culture must also be acknowledged as well as what this means for students and their learning (Howard, 2020). By centering race, the historical and lived experiences faced by students of color cannot be ignored

and teachers must move from behind the veil of being colorblind. When it comes to instructional practices, incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy is one possibility to begin to address the gaps faced by students of color. While far from a simple solution, it is one that when done properly should empower students and lead to academic excellence (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

For this study, the researcher used exploratory research to take a precursory look at culturally relevant practices within a suburban/rural school district. The study explored what extent middle and high school teachers in a suburban/rural school district perceive they are incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy in their daily practices. The study also compared how teachers' perceptions about their culturally relevant practices aligned or deviated from perceptions students from the district had about the same topics. The data collection tools that were used for this study included: a 15-item questionnaire that was administered to all teachers in the school district, a 13-item questionnaire that was administered to select high school students at the district's high schools, semi-structured interviews with 12 middle school and high school teachers, and a five-year analysis of end-of-grade test scores, access to advanced courses, and discipline disproportionalities. The researcher used the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory to analyze the data collected during the study and to explore how the framework's tenets could be used uncover inequities in the school district and work to reduce the identified gaps.

The researcher found that, to an extent, there are teachers within the school district who are currently using various components of culturally relevant pedagogy. When compared to the perceptions held by the students, it was discovered that the teachers perceive that they are using more culturally relevant practices than they actually are. The research conducted in this study

holds value for both scholars and practitioners. The study adds to the larger body of research by showing the value for all students of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy and by highlighting the importance of focusing on the topic of race when implementing culturally relevant practices.

To my grandmother, I wish you were here to see me finish this. You always believed in me and had confidence that I would succeed in whatever I set out to do. Thank you for always being there for me. I love you.

To my wife and son, thank you for all the motivation and encouragement you gave me to keep writing. I love you both and would have quit a long time ago if not for your belief in me.

To my parents, thank you for raising me to have enough confidence to set big goals, even if success was not a guarantee. Also, thank you for all of your support over the past few years. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my advisor, Dr. Kathleen Brown, thank you for everything you have done for me over the past several years. I cannot even imagine where I would be right now without your guidance and expertise. Through my journey you have been caring, compassionate, and have always challenged me. You showed me that you cared about the scholar and the individual and I am truly grateful for everything. Thank you!

To my committee members, Dr. Martinette Horner, Dr. Dena Keeling, Dr. Amanda Moran, and Dr. Chris Scott, thank you for serving on my committee and for taking the time to support me during this process. I appreciate each one of you and value the opportunity to have worked with you.

Dr. Dena Keeling, thank you for serving as my mentor during my internship. You provided me with countless opportunities to see equity work in practice and provided a great foundation and motivation to continue with my own research. Your guidance also led me to realize that to be successful as we move forward, we are going to need a lot more cheese.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

A certain group of students in America's schools are faced with a struggle that prevents them from accessing an empowering form of education. Darling-Hammond (2010) explained that the education these students are missing out on is one that would allow them to "take control of the course of their own learning" while teaching them to "think critically and powerfully" (p. 28). Instead of having this opportunity, these students face the reality of receiving an education devoid of high-quality programs, quality resources, and experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2006). This struggle originates from the question of whom to educate and how to equitably allocate resources (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2010, 2012). While experiencing this struggle may have some impact on all students, it is all too familiar for students of color. Results show that students of color are receiving unequal access to important resources when compared to their White counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard, 2020).

As a result of inequitable access to resources, a perceived gap in performance between students of color and White students has surfaced (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2010, 2012). This gap, which showcases the disparities in performance on standardized tests, is also referred to as the achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out that tremendous amounts of energy have been devoted to finding an explanation for this gap. Too much time and effort has been spent focusing on student achievement and not enough looking at disparities in opportunity (Darling-Hammond,

2010). These disparities, or lack of access to high-quality curriculum, educators, and resources, have created what is described as an opportunity gap (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2010, 2012) or “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). Recognizing the causes of this opportunity gap will assist in identifying long-standing systemic problems that need to be addressed. This recognition will also be integral when creating an empowering form of education for students of color.

For change to occur in the current system, a number of steps are necessary. To begin, the historical context of what has caused these inequities must be explored and understood. Without recognizing why a problem exists, it will be difficult to eliminate it. Secondly, race and culture must also be acknowledged as well as what this means for students and their learning (Howard, 2020). Presenting an academic program that allows the students’ excellence to shine is another step towards creating an empowering form of education. Incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy is one possibility to address these goals. While far from a simple solution, it is one that when done properly should empower students and lead to academic excellence (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Problem Statement

U.S. Department of Education (2017, 2018) statistics indicate that the demographics of public education in the United States are changing rapidly. Between the years 2000 and 2017 the percentage of school-age children who were White declined from 62 percent to 51 percent. During the same time period, the percentage of children that were Black decreased from 15 to 14 percent while Hispanic populations increased from 16 to 25 percent. Accompanying this change in the ethnic and racial makeup of students was almost no change in teacher demographics. In the year 2017, only 7% of public school teachers were Black and 9% Hispanic (Howard &

Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2017, 2018). In this same year, the number of White teachers hovered around 80% with the majority of these being middle class, monolingual, and female (Howard, 2020; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2019; Love, 2019 U.S. Department of Education, 2017, 2018).

When the cultural mismatch experienced in today's schools exists, teachers' mindset and actions may cause more harm than intended. In an attempt to educate or define their students, teachers may subconsciously lean on historically based, racial stereotypes (Howard, 2020). For example, Howard (2020) explained that while today's teachers may not buy into ideas of racial inferiority, like eugenics for example, their actions might be a result of the historical influence such movements have had. Howard (2020) cited the work of Irvine and Irvine (1983) and Kozol (2005) to explain that low expectations for students of color, exclusion from advanced programs, and inequitable school funding were all direct results of past, racially motivated movements. In addition to these practices, teachers who do not fully understand their students, commonly resort to using a deficit-based mindset (Gay, 2013, 2018; Howard, 2010, 2020; Hyland, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009; Love, 2019). This is detrimental to students of color because it shifts the focus to what they do not have instead of focusing on the funds of knowledge they may bring to the classroom (Gay, 2018; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2017).

The cultural disconnect explained above does not stop with teacher-student interactions and in fact extends to the general curriculum. Most mainstream education policies and practices reflect a Eurocentric focus and values (Gay, 2018). Gay (2018) pointed out that most curriculums in the United States are reflective of a Eurocentric culture that highlights the perspectives, experiences, and privilege of the demographically dominant group. Gay (2018) continued to

explain that the schooling system that has been perceived to be cultureless is in fact culturally responsive to the Eurocentric point of view.

By introducing culturally relevant pedagogy, all members of the classroom community may benefit. Milner (2017) explained that culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students, incorporates students' culture into learning, and creates classroom contexts beneficial to learning. Through these practices, the teacher is able to create an environment that provides an opportunity for marginalized students to succeed academically and psychologically (Cholewa et al., 2014). In addition to benefiting the students, educators may also benefit from learning about and incorporating culturally relevant practices (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). By committing to and incorporating these practices, practitioners can stop forcing students of color to assimilate to the mainstream ways of learning and being (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Rodriguez-Garcia, 2010). As well as benefiting students of color, incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy also possesses benefits for White students. By incorporating the voice of others and cultural diversity, the teacher is able to remove the Eurocentric, racial hierarchy that reinforces White, cultural hegemony and provide viewpoints and stories that may otherwise have been ignored (Byrd, 2016).

Context of Study

The gap that has been discussed is not a new occurrence or something that is the result of recent practices. Ladson-Billings (2006) highlighted the work of several scholars while identifying how certain longstanding practices and events throughout history have created educational inequities for students of color. For Black students, these inequities trace back to the period of enslavement when it was illegal for Blacks to be educated (Ladson-Billings, 2006). After slavery was abolished, things did not miraculously improve. For over 100 years, various

forms of discrimination kept Black students from accessing the same form of education as their White counterparts. Whether it was due to inadequate resources, or only being available to attend school for one-third of the year due to farm labor obligations, Black students did not have a resemblance of the same experiences until the late-1960s (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As Ladson-Billings (2006) pointed out, after experiencing all of these challenges, why would it be expected for an achievement gap to not be present? Black students weren't the only group experiencing educational inequities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Practices denying educational access for Latino students date back to 1848 (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Situations including the legal proceedings of *Mendez v. Westminster* and the Lemon Grove Incident detailed how school segregation extended to Hispanic students preventing them from accessing an equitable, high-quality education.

Howard (2020) explained that despite existing for almost two centuries, the gap has increasingly become of more importance in recent years. Over the past few decades, policy makers, legislators, school leaders, and the public have recognized that this gap is one of the most pressing educational and social challenges facing the United States in the 21st century (Howard, 2020). The gap between students of color and White students isn't solely visible when looking at test scores. In addition to the recognizable discrepancies in standardized test scores, disparities also exist when looking at student grades, high school graduation rates, participation in advanced classes and programs, referrals to and placement in special education programs, and suspension rates (Howard, 2020; Milner, 2017).

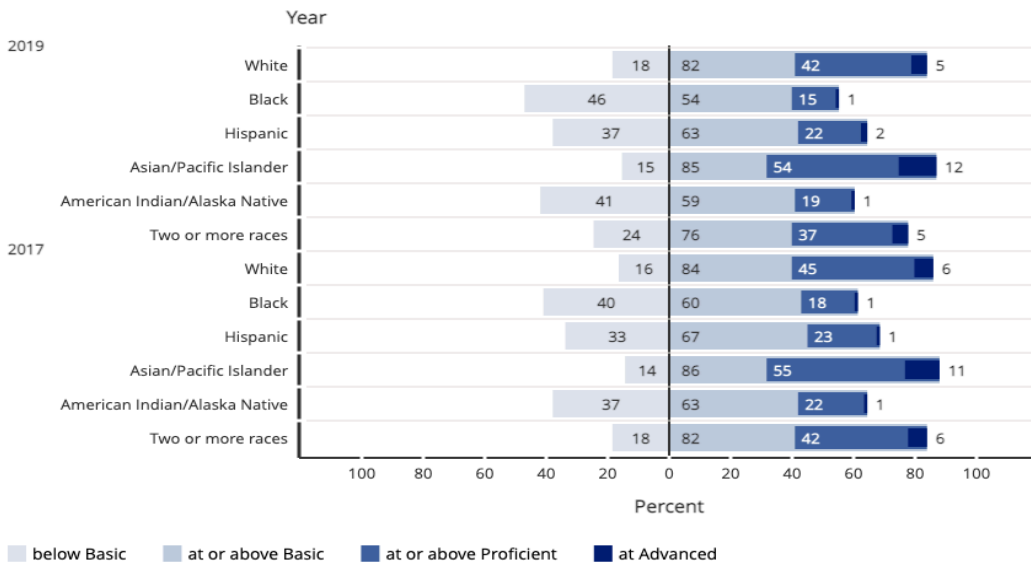
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results can be used to identify current standardized test performance levels across the United States and to highlight current gaps between racial subgroups. The NAEP, commonly referred to as the nation's report card, is

the “only ongoing, nationally representative assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subjects” (Howard, 2020, p. 13). The NAEP is given to students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grade in a variety of subjects. Reading and mathematics assessments are legislatively mandated to occur every two years for 4th and 8th grade (Hussar et al., 2020). Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 show NAEP results for 8th grade students from 2017 and 2019. The results are broken down by race/ethnicity and indicate the percentages of the tested population whose results are: below basic, at or above basic, at or above proficient, at advanced. The results show that for both subjects and both years, the percentage of Black and Hispanic students below basic is more than two times the percentage of White students. When looking at percentages of students at or above proficient, the percentage of White students is almost two times greater than both Black and Hispanic students.

Figure 1.1

NAEP 2019 and 2017 8th Grade Reading Scores by Race

Percentage below Basic, percentage at or above Basic, percentage at or above Proficient and percentage at Advanced for grade 8 reading, by Race/ethnicity used to report trends, school-reported [SDRACE] for jurisdiction: 2017 and 2019 National

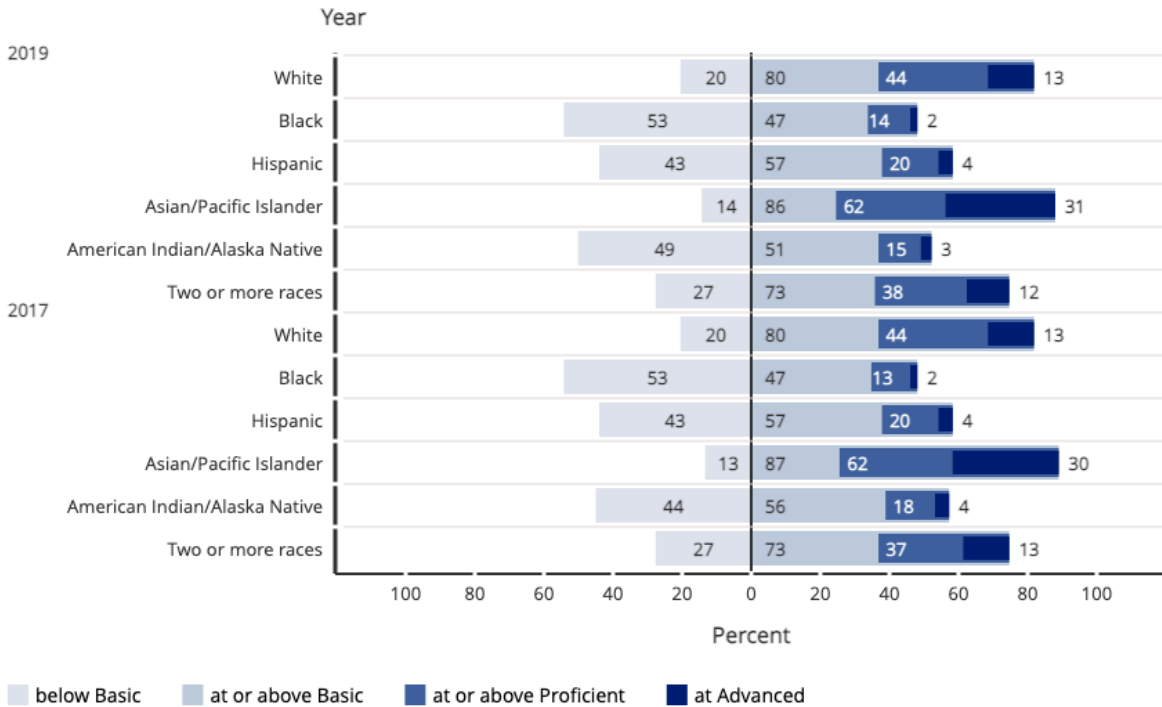


(The Nation’s Report Card, 2020)

Figure 1.2

NAEP 2019 and 2017 8th Grade Mathematics Scores by Race

Percentage below Basic, percentage at or above Basic, percentage at or above Proficient and percentage at Advanced for grade 8 mathematics, by Race/ethnicity used to report trends, school-reported [SDRACE] for jurisdiction: 2019 and 2017 National



(The Nation’s Report Card, 2020)

While NAEP scores reveal the current discrepancy between racial groups on standardized tests, The College Board reporting data can be analyzed to identify gaps in participation in advanced programs. The *10th Annual AP Report to the Nation* by The College Board (2013) included the 1,003,430 U.S. public high school graduates who took at least one AP Exam. Table 1.1 provides a breakdown by race of AP test takers. The population studied was the 2013 graduating class and Table 1.1 reports the percentage of each racial group in comparison to the total graduating class, the population of students taking AP exams, and the population of students

scoring a 3 or better on an AP exam. Based on these percentages, it is evident that there was a much greater number of White students taking AP exams, and scoring at least a 3, than students of color.

When looking at the over-representation and over-referral to special education, Black students receive special education services for mental retardation three times more than all other racial groups combined and have a greater chance of being educated away from their peers (Milner, 2017; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2009). Similar statistics can be seen when looking at school suspension data by race. Figure 1.3 from the 2018 *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* shows the racial breakdown by percentage of public school students who received out-of-school suspensions (NCES, 2019). Despite making up a smaller percentage of total students, the statistics for students of color being suspended are alarming.

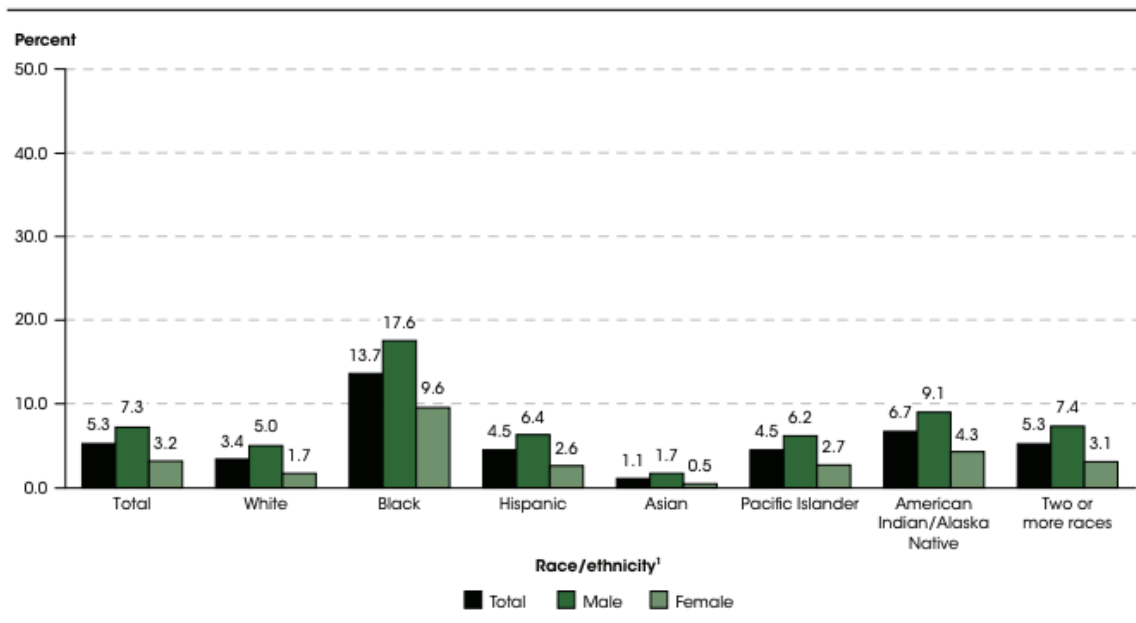
Table 1.1

Percentages of AP Test Takers by Race/Ethnicity (2013 Graduating Class)

	% Graduating Class	% AP Exam Taking Population	% Population Scoring 3+ on AP Exam
White	58.3	55.9	61.3
Hispanic/Latino	18.8	18.8	16.9
Black/African American	14.5	9.2	4.6
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	5.9	10.7	12.7
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0	0.5	0.5

Figure 1.3

Public School Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions by Race and Sex (2013)



(NCES, 2019)

The following study took place in Cooper County School District. Cooper County School District (CCSD) is the pseudonym for a small, suburban/rural school district serving approximately 9,000 students located in the southeast United States. The district currently has fewer than 20 schools (K-12). The make up of schools within CCSD is 6 elementary, 5 K-8, 3 middle (with one including grades 5-8), and 5 high school (3 traditional, one with an early college focus, and one alternative). The 2018-2019 District Profile revealed an 88.5% graduation rate for all students, a statistic that exceeds the state average of 87.7%. The 2018-2019 school year reported a total of 594.45 teachers working in the entire district.

Current reporting data from CCSD reveals similar statistics and gaps to what is recognized on the national level. As a result, in the spring of 2016, CCSD founded a district equity team. Between 2016 and 2020 the equity team established an equity plan, wrote mission and vision statements, and conducted professional development for district staff. The mission

statement focuses the team's attention on embedding equity in all areas of the district while supporting students, advocating for social justice, and utilizing culturally relevant resources.

Purpose of Study

For this study, the researcher used exploratory research to take a precursory look at culturally relevant practices within a suburban/rural school district. The study explored what extent middle and high school teachers in Cooper County School District perceive they are incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy in their daily practices. This research had not been previously conducted in this district and the potential results were unknown. The study provided CCSD a baseline for future efforts related to culturally relevant pedagogy and equity.

Research Questions

Keeping the design of the study in mind, the following research question and sub research questions directed the investigation, with specific attention paid to the practices regarding culturally relevant pedagogy:

- Research Question: Are the middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom practices? If so, which ones and how?
- Sub Research Question #1: What are teachers' perceptions of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant teaching strategies?
- Sub Research Question #2: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?
- Sub Research Question #3: How do the perceptions of the teachers align and/or deviate from the perceptions of the students?

Significance of Research

The research conducted in this study holds value for both scholars and practitioners in the field of education. By exploring the historical causes and influences of the current gaps facing students of color, the researcher emphasized why a shift in practice is necessary. The cultural mismatch, along with the various gaps facing students of color, emphasize the need for a different approach to what is occurring in the classroom. The study identified how culturally relevant pedagogy can be a plausible solution. Despite the apparent need for culturally relevant practices, implementation also faces its own challenges.

Spillane et al. (2006) posited that during implementation, new ideas may be perceived as being more familiar than they actually are. In these situations, teachers struggle to recognize the differences between what is new and what they are already doing. Regardless of its necessity, culturally relevant pedagogy requires deliberate action for successful implementation to occur. Culturally relevant pedagogy is not comprised of boxes that can be checked off (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Instead, several important factors must be considered for successful implementation. To begin, teachers must possess cultural competence to be able to teach successfully in cross-cultural environments (Howard, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009). Teachers must also have pedagogical content knowledge to be able to combine the academic content with pedagogy and make the necessary adaptations for the students in the classroom (Howard, 2020; Hoy & Hoy, 2009; Shulman 1987). Another challenge facing teachers as they implement culturally relevant pedagogy is the ability to conduct critical self-reflection. This form of self-reflection requires the teacher to identify how his or her own thoughts, biases, perceptions, actions, and upbringing may be complicit in the challenges they are facing in the classroom (Howard, 2020; Hughes & Pennington, 2017).

It has been over 20 years since culturally relevant pedagogy was first introduced to the professional literature on teaching and learning (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). During the past few decades, culturally relevant pedagogy has gained popularity within the research community. As a result of recent attractiveness, it remained of interest to the researcher to find out if teachers were actually incorporating components into their daily classroom practices. If culturally relevant practices were being used, which aspects were most present? If culturally relevant practices were not being used, what are the primary causes for them being excluded from the classroom? By focusing on the teachers in CCSO, the researcher hoped to provide answers to these questions that may be used by the district and in future studies.

For this study, the researcher used critical race theory as the theoretical framework. By conducting data analysis through a CRT lens, the researcher was able to identify implementation issues of culturally relevant pedagogy faced by CCSO and other districts across the country. This framework was helpful when exploring the perceptions that the teachers shared as well as when looking at the gaps that currently exist within the district. The framework was also selected to provide students of color an opportunity to share their stories.

The literature review can be of significance to the practitioner or scholar. To begin, the literature review presents the importance for focusing on culture in a school setting. This discussion allows the teacher or school leader to recognize the impact that ignoring student differences can have on all students, but especially students of color. The literature review provides an overview of culturally relevant pedagogy that includes what it is, what the components of it are, and who the prominent scholars involved with the research are. The literature review also highlights the significance of focusing on culture and race in schools and how it can improve learning outcomes. Practitioners can learn from the literature review as it

provides examples of how culturally relevant pedagogy looks when successfully implemented across the curriculum.

The study has great significance for CCSD, the partner school district. The study allows CCSD to discover what is going on in their middle and high schools as it relates to culturally relevant pedagogy. Through this exploratory study, the researcher was able to share what practices teachers perceive they are currently using in their classrooms. The counternarrative also holds value for the district, as they have the opportunity to see how students of color perceive the educational experience currently provided by the district. Once they receive the information, CCSD will be able to outline the types of professional development that will be valuable and time efficient. District leadership will also be able to recognize how they may align the study's findings with their new equity initiative.

In addition to working with CCSD, this research also has potential significance to other school districts. The study will provide school districts with a starting point and statistics related to what was done in CCSD. This may give districts an outline of the approach they could take to explore culturally relevant practices within their schools. Scaling down from the district level, the researcher hopes that the study will have an impact on teachers as well, and eventually students. The study provides a pathway for educators to become more reflexive about what they are doing for the students of color in their classroom. By outlining the various components of culturally relevant pedagogy and discussing critical race theory, the study will allow teachers and school leaders to explore how their current practices may be detrimental to students of color.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) was used by the researcher as the theoretical framework for this study. CRT maintains a focus on “studying and transforming the relationship among race,

racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). In addition to conventional civil rights studies, CRT also takes economics, history, as well as group and self-interests into consideration (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT scholars work to maintain a focus on the effects of race and racism, while also concentrating on the dominant system and effects of White supremacy (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Chapman, 2013; Cook, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995, 2002, 2011; Dalton, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1995; Rabaka, 2013). CRT was founded on several basic tenets. These tenets are the beliefs necessary to accept and participate within CRT work. Five key tenets include: the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992a, 1992b, 1995), Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995), the critique of liberalism (Crenshaw, 1988), counterstorytelling (Matsuda, 1995), and interest convergence (Bell, 1995).

In addition to the large presence CRT has had in legal research (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1995, 2011), it has also expanded into the field of education in recent years. For the following study, four of the five tenets of CRT were used for analysis. The permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, critique of liberalism (to include: colorblindness, individualism, and meritocracy), and counterstorytelling were used to focus on inequities currently occurring in the district’s schools.

Definition of Terms

- **Colorblindness:** The idea that one does not or should not recognize racial differences. CRT criticizes this because believing in equality and treating everyone equal it is almost impossible to scrutinize how White privilege and how Whiteness has been normalized (Williams, 1997).
- **Counterstorytelling:** A way of telling a story that attempts to uncover, or prove false, beliefs or myths held by the majority. The alternative narrative provides an opportunity to

understand what life may be like for other people. Counterstorytelling challenges the accounts of the majority by providing a voice to marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

- **Critical Race Theory:** A framework that evolved from critical legal studies with a focus on studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power.
- **Critique of Liberalism:** CRT scholars have a history of discontent with the idea of liberalism being used as a framework for focusing on the racial problems present in America. Scholars find fault with the fact that liberalism does not take a head on approach for solving these race-based problems. CRT scholars have specifically focused on several liberal ideologies including: colorblindness, neutrality of law, meritocracy, and individualism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Decuir & Dixon, 2004).
- **Culture:** A system of values, codes, views, and beliefs that are learned from and shared by a specific group of people. This system is used to give meaning to the lives and behaviors of individuals within a group. These characteristics are neither fixed nor static.
- **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy:** The mindset, planning process, and actual teaching practices that utilize students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to make learning more relevant for them. The practice is formed around three components: academic achievement, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness.
- **Individualism:** A liberal belief that individual effort will directly contribute to an individual's success. Donnor (2013) claims Whites use the mythic belief of individualism to justify the inequitable educational status quo. Individualism fails to take any other

influencing factors (e.g., resources, opportunity, and barriers) into consideration when rationalizing success.

- Interest Convergence: One of the tenets of CRT, discussed by Derrick Bell (1995), that explores the idea that the interests of Blacks will only be served when it aligns with the interests of Whites, particularly elite Whites (Brown & Jackson, 2013).
- Meritocracy: A liberal belief that if an individual makes the right choices and works hard, their effort will lead to success and their merit will be rewarded (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Subedi, 2013; Vaught & Hernandez, 2013). Success will ultimately find those who work the hardest and are the most ambitious.
- Pedagogy: The conscious activity an individual may engage in when planning to enhance the learning in others. This activity may include the attitudes, dispositions, or through processes used to achieve a learning outcome.
- Permanence of Racism: The belief that racism is permanently ingrained in American life and society. This idea is also referred to as racial realism and presents that in the United States Black people will never gain full equality.
- Reputation and Status Property: A component of Whiteness as property related to the historical belief that a social hierarchy exists based on race. With Whiteness being placed on the top, it may also be viewed as a form of property and belief and reinforced the idea that an individual's reputation based on Whiteness could be viewed as a form of property and was valued in the market (Harris, 1995). Therefore, if an individual's reputation was damaged, so too was an extent of his or her personal property.
- Rights of Disposition: A component of Whiteness as property. This function does not include the physical transfer of property, but occurs when Whiteness is bestowed upon a

non-white individual. This may be experienced when conformity to Eurocentric norms by non-white individuals is celebrated or when engaging in a cultural practice is punished.

- **Rights to Use and Enjoy:** A component of Whiteness as property. Harris (1995) explained that when an individual possesses property, they also possess the right to use and enjoy the property. Because Whiteness is both used as a part of identity and as a property interest, it may be experienced as well as used as a resource (Harris, 1995).
- **Students of Color:** A student who self-identifies as being a member of any non-white racial group.
- **The Absolute Right to Exclude:** A component of Whiteness as property. In addition to the rights to use and enjoyment of certain privileges associated with being White, Whiteness as property provides the right to exclude others from enjoying these privileges (Harris, 1995)
- **Whiteness as Property:** A tenet of CRT stating that Whiteness can be considered as a form of property. Based on this notion, property may function through possession, use, or disposition. Whiteness as property may also be exhibited by one's right to enjoyment, the right of exclusion, and the right to transfer (Harris, 1995).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter will review the literature pertaining to culturally relevant pedagogy. Before addressing the topic, attention will be given to defining culture and pedagogy and explaining the roles they play in education. The review will then explore the components of culturally relevant pedagogy based on the research of prominent scholars in the field. To address how the practice has evolved over time, new theories related to culturally relevant pedagogy will be examined. At this point there will be a shift from theory to practice, as the research will identify examples of culturally relevant pedagogy across the curriculum and how it has been shown to benefit students. The discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy wraps up by introducing the construct of race and explaining the importance of centering race when engaging in culturally relevant practices.

The literature review will conclude with an overview of the theoretical framework of critical race theory. Critical race theory will be introduced by providing an explanation of what it is and a brief background of how and why it was founded. The section will also explore the major tenets of critical race theory while explaining how each has guided the research. In concluding the discussion of critical race theory, a connection is made to the proposed study and the three tenets that will be used while analyzing data throughout this research.

Culture: An Overview

What is Culture?

Gay (2018) in citing Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) defined culture as “a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others” (p. 8). These behaviors and values are learned, shared, and displayed by specific groups of people. Culture may be exhibited in material as well as nonmaterial items and when identified as a set of characteristics “they are neither fixed nor static” (Yosso, 2005, p. 76).

The development of culture does not happen by chance. Love (2019) explained that one’s culture reflects the experiences and conditions people face. Culture can be shaped by the education one receives, the social and economic conditions one faces, or the political experiences one is subject to. With that being said, “culture does not simply fall from the sky” (Love, 2019, p. 128). Instead, it is developed as groups of people respond to certain realities and find ways to survive in their current situations.

Why Culture Matters?

In addition to simply knowing what it is, culture carries a great deal of significance in an educational setting and must be understood for teachers and school leaders to effectively serve all students. For students, culture equips them with the ability to find meaning in new content and the skills to convey these understandings to peers and teachers. The selected mode of communication, for conveying these understandings, is often directly linked to their identified ethnic group or culture. If this selected communication style does not mirror the dominant style of the school, students and teachers may experience a mismatch. As a result of this mismatch, teachers may fail to acknowledge the assets a student brings to the classroom, subsequently

causing the student to be viewed as deficient. When a teacher takes this approach, the end result may be a student's academic performance not being accurately assessed (Gay, 2018).

According to Gay, for educators to be successful, culture must be at the heart of everything they do. There should be no opportunity for remaining "culturally neutral" (Gay, 2018, p. 8). Remaining culturally neutral does not signify teachers have ill intentions towards students of color, however, as Gay explained, having good intentions when it comes to educating students will ultimately remain insufficient without action. Far too many teachers continue to attempt to educate students while only acknowledging one acceptable way for communicating and behaving in the classroom. A key contributor to this disconnect is the misrecognition of multiple cultures within a classroom. If change in the classroom is to happen, the status quo of treating all students as cultural equals must be dismantled. Without this change, inequities that impact diverse student groups will remain in place.

Culture in Education

The racial demographics of public education in the United States are changing rapidly. U.S. Department of Education (2017, 2018) statistics indicate that between the years 2000 and 2017 the percentage of school-age children who were White declined from 62 percent to 51 percent. During the same time period, the percentage of children that were Black decreased from 15 to 14 percent while Hispanic populations increased from 16 to 25 percent. Accompanying this change in the ethnic and racial makeup of students was almost no change in teacher demographics. During the same years, U.S. Department of Education data reveal that the population of teachers did not change as rapidly as the students. In 2000, statistics showed that 84% of public school teachers were White while only 7% were Black and 6% were Hispanic. The numbers only decreased slightly for White teachers by 2017, with the percentage dropping

to 80%. The percentage of Black public school teachers remained right around 7% and the percentage of Hispanic public school teachers increased slightly to 9%.

The ethnic and racial diversity seen within the nation's schools is now a permanent reality (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) cited that the "growing chasm" between the students' and teachers' cultures has created a need to be concerned. Despite wanting to do what's best for the students, the lack of cultural knowledge about what students bring to the classroom may prevent teachers from making an impact. Love (2019) explained that if educators do not examine their students' cultures, they would be more likely to turn to stereotypes instead of examples that explain students' lived experiences. An example of this is seen with research conducted by Hyland (2009) who studied a White, female elementary school teacher's practices over a two-year period. Hyland found that despite believing in her students' academic abilities, the teacher's effectiveness was limited due to her resistance to engage with the greater community. The noted resistance was a result of deficit thinking about families, community partners, and the local community in general.

Accompanying this reality is the glaring statistic that "students of color continue to underachieve in comparison to their counterparts from different racial and ethnic backgrounds" (Howard, 2010). Scholars have cited that the academic performance disparities are not a result of student deficiencies, but are in fact political in nature and directly connected to the historically oppressed status of underserved populations in the United States (Hilliard, 2002).

Throughout history there has been a trend of ignoring or misinterpreting cultural differences in the classroom. For example, Nasir and Hand (2006) in citing Richards (1997) pointed out that early approaches to gaining an understanding of how culture and race impacted the learning process originated in discriminatory social practices. Early researchers attempted to

explain differences on IQ tests and academic achievement by attributing it to cultural and biological factors and assuming that culture and race were directly linked. These studies only looked at the IQ test results, which generated a deficit approach, and did not acknowledge the cultural strengths and/or assets one may possess, not to mention the historical issues of racial bias that has been connected to IQ assessments (Thaler et al., 2014).

As time passed, scholars in the fields of education, sociology, and psychology began to defend the notion that students of color were not deficient when it came to cognitive and social orientations, but instead these students were simply different from White children. As a result of these findings, scholars urged researchers to develop conceptual models to better understand these differences and to identify ways for curriculum and classrooms to support a culturally diverse group of students (Baratz & Baratz, 1970; Cole & Bruner, 1971; Valentine, 1968).

Additional research continued to focus on the differences in learning styles between students of different cultures and the importance of its recognition in the classroom. Au and Jordan (1981) explained that it was important for educators to understand the differences between school and informal learning. By comprehending these differences, educators would be able to bring relevance of the curriculum to a child's own experiences. When teachers are able to recognize and appreciate their students' cultures they may make the necessary adjustments in their teaching. This transformation would allow for the creation of a culturally compatible program and would not strip the child from appreciating his or her own culture (Jordan, 1985; Macias, 1987). A continued lack of cultural recognition and compatibility within schools would provide explanation for school failure (Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987).

In addition to the conscious experiences that influence cultural groups, it is also important to understand the sub-conscious experiences and how they may influence behavior, response,

and how certain things are processed. These ingrained characteristics may directly be associated with learning styles for certain groups of students. For example, for African American children, Hale (1986) explained that their cultural style has a great impact on their performance in an academic setting. The impact may be seen with certain activities they favor or it may be present when interpreting certain acts and behavior. Hale (1986) identified that Black children have high degrees of exposure to stimulation from the creative arts. By being surrounded with stimuli from the visual arts, audio arts, video arts, and fashion arts, Black children develop a cultural sense of expression that accompanies them to the classroom.

Hale (1986) echoed similar ideas to support the need to recognize African American students as a distinct cultural group. She explained that cultural connections have been passed down through generations and reflect forms of Africanism survived through slavery to present day. Some actions, often misinterpreted by White teachers as disobedience, may be so culturally ingrained that they just happen. When these scenarios play out in the classroom, “cultural conflict” (Hale, 1986, p. 39) is likely to be the result. According to Hale (1986), cultural conflict occurs when the learning style that a child is using is different from the approach that is favored by the school. Considering these differences, Love (2019) pointed out the importance for teachers to study and understand Black culture, as well as the cultures of other students in the classroom. Without this understanding, teachers will lack the ability to recognize the many gifts that Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Mixed-Race culture is filled with. By ignoring the assets students are bringing to the classroom, teachers will then be left to fall back on stereotypes and preconceived notions that lead to deficit thinking (Love, 2019).

Culture as Capital

As educators interpret the culture of students in their classrooms, a key component to avoiding a deficit mindset is acknowledging the value culture can carry with it or recognizing students' cultural capital. According to English and Bolton (2016), cultural capital is a form of capital that is “represented in manners, taste, bodily deportment, dispositions, dress, consumption patterns, and forms of knowledge” (p. 57). According to French Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, it refers to the “accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society” (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). Unlike other forms of capital, specifically economic capital, cultural capital remains difficult to measure due to its noneconomic and largely intangible status.

Despite the noneconomic status, interpreting cultural capital can hold value for educators, especially when recognizing potential conflicts between students and the system. The knowledge that students develop from cultural capital may be approved or not approved by school systems. Because schools frequently promote “patterns of the dominant culture” (English & Bolton, 2016, p. 59), non-dominant cultures are usually ignored or not seen within the curriculum or other academic routines. According to Yosso (2005), these patterns typically promote the White, middle class culture as the norm. To move beyond the common theme, Yosso highlighted how critical race theory expands this view to center the lens of the experience of people of color to reveal accumulated assets and resources. Citing researchers, Yosso highlighted six forms of capital exhibited by communities of color. When working with students of color, these examples (See Table 2.1) should be considered when thinking about the cultural strengths students and their greater communities are bringing to the classroom (Love, 2019).

Table 2.1*Six Forms of Capital Exhibited by Communities of Color*

Example of Community Cultural Wealth	Description
Aspirational Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future • Centered on resiliency to achieve past real and perceived barriers • Parents maintain high aspirations for children’s future • Culture of possibility • Draws on work of Gandara (1982, 1995)
Linguistic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual and social skills are attained through communication in one or more languages • Stems from previous research on bi-lingual education • Consistent with idea that students of color begin school with multiple language and communication skills • Strong presence of storytelling tradition in homes
Familial Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural knowledge and understanding fostered among familia (kin) • Engages in a sense of community and expands concept of family (includes extended family) • Important lessons learned from this family that impact relationship with the greater community and approach to education • Isolation is minimized and families believe in constantly helping others so they do not need to suffer through problems alone • Informed by work related to communal bonds, funds or knowledge, and pedagogies of home brought to the classroom by students of color
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks of people • Community resources • Contacts may provide instrumental and emotional support • Provide assistance in navigating society’s institutions
Navigational Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and skills to maneuver through social institutions not originally intended for communities of color • Skills to “maneuver through structures of inequality permeated by racism” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80)
Resistant Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and skills developed through oppositional behavior that challenges inequalities • Grounded in resistance to subordination that has historically been exhibited by communities of color • Encouraged by families to engage in behaviors that challenge the status quo • Includes knowledge of oppressive structures and motivation to transform them

(Yosso, 2005)

Pedagogy: An Overview

What is Pedagogy?

Watkins and Mortimore (1999) pointed out that definitions of pedagogy have changed over time and by context. For example, they explained how practitioners and policy makers are likely to view pedagogy differently. With that being said, they arrived at a common definition and explained that pedagogy is, “any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another” (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999, p. 3).

These conscious activities include the thought process used by a teacher when determining how to get students involved with learning (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999). Components of pedagogy include the ways that the teacher focuses on the learning outcome, how they view knowledge in general, how they perceive the importance of the students’ knowledge, and how they decide to control the content (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

In addition to just having the skills or mindset to be pedagogically sound, a teacher must also recognize what the students must learn and how the material should be taught (Shulman, 1987). According to Shulman (1987), this ability to possess a professional understanding of how to teach a subject to a current group of students represents pedagogical content knowledge (Howard, 2020; Hoy & Hoy, 2009; Shulman 1987).

Shulman (1987) explained that pedagogical content knowledge is what separates the understanding of a “content specialist from that of the pedagogue” (p. 9). This skill allows for educators to combine academic content with pedagogy and make adaptations for the interests and abilities of the learners present in front of them (Shulman, 1987).

In citing Shulman (1987), Howard (2020) discussed how teachers should use pedagogical content knowledge to guide what they are doing in the classroom. In doing so, the teacher will be able to recognize specific ways to structure the academic content to combat any difficulties that are typically encountered by students during the learning process. The skills that the teachers possess will also allow them to address any specific learning needs that their students may have within a learning environment.

Howard (2020) explained that pedagogical content knowledge is extremely important when engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy. Simply having an understanding of culture will not result in effective teaching. Instead, Howard pointed out that the teacher must also possess an understanding about how to teach specific concepts and how to “structure instructional practices” (Howard, 2020, p. 73).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

While acknowledging and learning about students’ culture is important, it is only one small step in transforming what is taking place in education. Educators must work to find a way to recognize the cultural strengths their students are bringing to the classroom and tap into them when redeveloping their practices. Culturally relevant pedagogy is commonly referenced as a solution to situations like these. The following section will introduce culturally relevant pedagogy and several of the scholars who have been instrumental in the development of the theory. This section will identify what culturally relevant pedagogy is as well as provide an overview of why it can be beneficial for teachers to use with all students.

The term culturally relevant pedagogy, as first used by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a), is also referred to by other titles. Gay (2018) used culturally responsive pedagogy in her work unless discussing Ladson-Billings’ work. According to Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017),

there is little difference in the two terms' purpose, definition, and scope. The authors explained that the continued efforts by researchers and practitioners to make subtle distinctions between the two terms are ultimately counterproductive. Both culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching have similar ideas and goals. The differences that may exist are minimal at best. For example, Aronson and Laughter (2016) explained that Gay's focus was on teaching and sought to influence teacher competency and methods, while Ladson-Billings kept a focus on pedagogy to include attitudes and dispositions. For the remainder of this research, culturally relevant pedagogy will describe teaching that uses "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant for them" (Gay, 2018, p. 36). In instances where Gay's work is directly being cited, culturally responsive pedagogy will be used.

Geneva Gay and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Gay (2018) explained that for teaching to be most effective, certain factors impacting students should be taken into consideration. By addressing students' prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities, teachers can help students acquire the knowledge and skills they will apply in life. According to Gay (2018), far too often these factors are ignored in teaching "some Native, Latino, African, and Asian American students, especially if they are poor" (p. 28). Teachers tend to believe that good teaching will allow them to reach all students no matter their culture, class, or race. These beliefs typically result in all students being taught through a middle-class, Eurocentric lens (Gay, 2018).

To combat the situation outlined above, Gay (2018) created a character profile that includes the distinguishing characteristics of a culturally responsive teacher. Gay's character profile, highlighted in Table 2.2, consists of eight descriptors that explain what culturally

Table 2.2*Character Profile of Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Culturally Responsive Teaching is	Description	What it might look like
Validating	Acknowledges legitimacy of cultural heritages of different ethnic groups	Study of literary genres includes examples from wide variety of ethnic authors
	Builds bridges between school and home experiences	Math concepts and operations used to engage students in exploration of crafts, economics, architecture, employment patterns, population distribution, and consumer habits of different ethnic groups
	Utilizes a variety of instructional strategies and connects them to different learning styles	
	Teaches students to understand and appreciate their own (and others') cultural heritages	Opportunities provided to practice and demonstrate mastery using a wide range of sensory stimuli, and individual and group activities (Gay, 2018, p. 37)
Comprehensive & Inclusive	Incorporates resources and materials that are reflective of multicultural practices	
	Teachers use a variety of cultural resources to teach knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes	Students engage in caring relationships, shared resources, and work closely together and with the teacher to attain learning outcomes
	Students are held accountable for one another's learning as well as their own	Focus on academic success as well as cultural competence, critical social consciousness, political activism, and responsible community membership (Gay, 2018, pp. 38-39)
Multidimensional	The entire school community is involved in this growth and development (Gay, 2018, p. 38).	
	Encompasses curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments	Cross-curricular planning and teaching centered around a certain idea or concept (e.g., Concept of protest being taught by language arts, music, art, social studies)
	Requires tapping into wide range of cultural knowledge, experiences,	Involves teachers and students making decisions about products, evaluations, content delivery

Culturally Responsive Teaching is	Description	What it might look like
Empowering	contributions, and perspectives	
	Enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners	AVID program cited as an excellent example of how empowerment works
	Translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act	A system of “social scaffolding” is provided to help students develop academic and personal skills through social supports
	Teachers must show students they expect them to succeed	Learning “cultural capital” for school success (Gay, 2018, pp. 40-41)
	Benefits the students as whole beings, not just with regard to academic achievement (Gay, 2018, p. 40)	
Transformative	Recognizes the existing strengths and accomplishments of students and then enhances them further in the instructional process	Utilize verbal creativity and storytelling gift of some African American students as a way to help teach them writing skills
	Defies conventions of traditional educational practices with respect to ethnic students of color	Teach students to develop social consciousness and intellectual critique to be able to combat prejudices, racism, and other oppressive structures (Gay, 2018, p. 42)
	Makes academic success a nonnegotiable mandate for all students and an accessible goal Students are taught to be proud of their ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds	
	Helps students develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions (Gay, 2018, pp. 41-42)	
Emancipatory	Liberating; It releases the intellect of students of color from the “constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing” (Gay, 2018, p. 42)	Making authentic knowledge about different ethnic groups accessible to students
		Allow students to become more active in shaping their own learning

Culturally Responsive Teaching is	Description	What it might look like
	<p>Helps students realize that there is no one version of the truth</p> <p>The freedom to be ethnically expressive removes the psychological stress associated with and psychic energy deployed in “covering up” or “containing” one’s cultural inclinations (Gay, 2018, p. 43)</p>	<p>Students focus on group success and hold each other accountable (Gay, 2018, pp. 42-44)</p>
Humanistic	<p>Concern over human welfare, dignity, and respect of the various individuals and groups who comprise the U.S. and the world</p> <p>Holds value for majority and minority students</p> <p>Allows for development of knowledge of self and others (Gay, 2018, p. 44)</p>	<p>Allows all students to acquire deeper and more accurate knowledge about cultures, lives, and experiences of diverse groups</p> <p>New knowledge helps correct factual distortions and errors regarding racial and ethnic groups who have been misrepresented over history</p>
Normative & Ethical	<p>Current influence of mainstream educational policies and practices provide a Eurocentric culturally relevant educational experience</p> <p>Culturally responsive practices corrects this misconception and exclusion and pushes for equity and social justice (Gay, 2018, p. 45)</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for ethnic groups (especially those who are oppressed and marginalized – groups of color) to learn through the presence and influence of their culture (Gay, 2018, p. 45)</p>

responsive teaching is. Table 2.2 also includes a description for each characteristic along with an example of what this might look like in a classroom.

While a teacher encompassing the characteristics listed in this profile may have the traits associated with being a culturally responsive teacher, there are key roles and responsibilities the

teacher must take on to put the traits into practice. Gay (2018) cited research from Diamond and Moore (1995) as she organized teachers' roles and responsibilities into three categories. Culturally responsive teachers need to be cultural organizers, cultural mediators, as well as orchestrators of social contexts for learning. The role of cultural organizer requires teachers to “understand the how culture operates in daily classroom dynamics, create learning atmospheres that radiate cultural and ethnic diversity, and facilitate high academic achievement for all students” (Gay, 2018, pp. 51-52). As teachers serve as cultural organizers they must be intentional to create opportunities for students of different ethnic backgrounds to have an opportunity and the freedom to share their experiences and be valued in the learning environment.

As teachers work as cultural mediators, they must recognize and provide opportunities for students to engage in critical analysis and discussion about conflicts between cultures. A key component to serving as a cultural mediator is helping students identify and understand the inconsistencies between what is experienced as the mainstream culture and what is experienced by individuals within different cultural systems. Through this work the teacher will help students of various cultural backgrounds to work collaboratively together in an environment that allows them to feel empowered and replace oppressive stereotypes and racism (Gay, 2018).

The role of orchestrators of social contexts for learning calls on the teacher to be able to recognize how culture can influence the learning process and understand why this is important to the students' success. The teacher should then be able to create an experience that is compatible with the contexts and frames of reference ethnically diverse students are bringing to the classroom. While serving in this capacity, the teacher must avoid looking at their students through a deficit lens and must accept that they must also learn from their students (Gay, 2018).

Gay's (2018) research shows that culturally responsive teachers believe in the success and capabilities of their students. In order to help these abilities shine through, culturally responsive teachers find ways to scaffold their instruction in such a manner that it builds bridges between the content presented in the curriculum and the cultural experiences their students possess. By utilizing a variety of approaches to ensure they find a way to reach their students, culturally responsive teachers set the goal of academic success for everyone in the classroom.

For culturally responsive teaching to be successful it must be anchored on four pillars of practice. Gay (2018) explained that “teacher attitudes and expectations, cultural communication in the classroom, culturally diverse content in the curriculum, and culturally congruent instructional strategies” (p. 53) work together to validate and empower ethnically diverse students and their experiences. In doing so, these foundational pillars cultivate the individual abilities of students while leading to academic success.

Gloria Ladson-Billings and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings' (1995) work surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy provided an important theoretical tool for researchers and practitioners to use when “analyzing how instructional practices could be arranged in a manner that could tap into a wide array of communicative and cognitive processes” (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017, p. 7). Ladson-Billings' (1995) research helped provide a shift from the cultural-deficit mindset that was common in the day in educational research, to a more culturally centered approach for teaching students of color.

Ladson-Billings' (1995) research surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy has been grounded on three propositions. To be fully immersed in culturally relevant pedagogy, a teacher

must ensure that they are promoting cultural competence, academic achievement, and socio-political consciousness for their students.

The cultural competence component is described as a students' ability to understand and respect the culture they are from while learning in the school setting (Ladson-Billings, 2002). The necessity for cultural competence to be included in culturally relevant pedagogy came as a result of early scholarship that examined African American students who had experienced academic success. Fine (1986) and Fordham (1988) found that academic success for African American students typically came with the sacrifice of cultural and psychological well-being. Whether it came with the fear of being believed to be acting white (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Noguera, 2009; Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, & Harpalani, 2001) or as part of a social isolation tactic to distance themselves from other African American students, the true cultural connection was being ignored to avoid alienation (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2002). By establishing cultural competence, students may find the ability to navigate back and forth between their home and school cultures, thus becoming "bicultural" (Ladson-Billings, 2002, p. 111).

Academic achievement is another key component of culturally relevant pedagogy. According to Ladson-Billings (2002), academic achievement "represents intellectual growth and the ability to produce knowledge" (p. 111). Academic achievement can be achieved in a variety of school subjects and should be the expectation of all teachers engaging with culturally relevant pedagogy. In these classrooms, high expectations should be held for all students and the teachers should demand that success is the outcome for everyone in the learning community (Ladson-Billings, 2002). In a culturally relevant classroom, the teacher should be providing many different ways to allow students to demonstrate achievement and to experience success. The teacher should also recognize their responsibility in leading the students to becoming

academically successful (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2002). Table 2.3 identifies practices related to culturally relevant pedagogy and developing knowledge that Ladson-Billings (2009) identified while conducting her research. The table identifies the relationships teachers have with knowledge and how they get students to gain confidence and achieve success academically.

Table 2.3

How Culturally Responsive Teachers Perceive Knowledge

Culturally Relevant Teaching...	Description & Characteristics
Views Knowledge as Something That Is Continuously Re-created, Recycled, and Shared	Knowledge is viewed as an evolutionary process
	Knowledge is not static. Teachers do not believe knowledge can only be passed from teacher to students
	Teachers use cultural artifacts and students' knowledge to facilitate teaching and learning
Views Knowledge Critically	Teachers acknowledge what forms of knowledge students bring to the classroom and incorporate them into learning
	Teachers have the ability to supplement with resources to get students to respond critically to the content
	Teachers demonstrate ability to create knowledge
Is Passionate About Knowledge	Teachers facilitate conversations and activities that allow students to examine critically and challenge knowledge
	Teachers are engaged with and passionate about the content
	The search for important ideas fuels the teacher's excitement
Helps Students Develop Necessary Skills	Teachers avoid simply reciting facts and instead find connections to help students with the content
	Teachers build bridges and scaffold material to help students gain the skills necessary for participation in class
Sees Excellence as a Complex Standard That Takes Student Diversity and Individual Differences into Account	High expectations are held for all students
	Teachers avoid rewarding mediocrity and believe students need to experience excellence
	Out-of-class excellence (sports, church, etc.) is acknowledge and used as a way to grow student confidence

(Ladson-Billings, 2009)

The third proposition that composes Ladson-Billings' (2002) framework for culturally relevant pedagogy is allowing students to develop a greater socio-political consciousness. This practice builds on the cultural competence and academic achievement frames and works to help students identify, comprehend, and critique social inequities. For teachers to successfully integrate the development of socio-political consciousness among their students, teachers must be aware of and recognize specific inequities and what has allowed these inequities to develop. The teachers will then use this knowledge, along with that of the curriculum, to create a learning experience that is impactful to the students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In her book *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Ladson-Billings (2009) conducted a small-scale ethnographic study with eight teachers who had experienced success teaching African American students. By studying these teachers, Ladson-Billings was able to identify and analyze culturally relevant practices she found successful teachers use. The mindset that teachers have is extremely important in their students achieving in the classroom. Ladson-Billings found commonalities in the positive ways teachers viewed themselves and how they viewed the teaching profession. Table 2.4 outlines six actions these teachers exhibit. The actions identified are related to a number of different things that impact what and how the teachers perform in the classroom. Some items are directly related to the teacher and how he/she views him/herself. Other items have to do with the teaching practice and the mindset that allows the teachers to be successful with African American students. The second column of the table provides a more in-depth look at what exactly the teachers are doing in certain situations.

An additional attribute culturally relevant teachers bring to their classroom is building social relationships within the classroom and extending these relationships to the greater

Table 2.4*Actions of Teachers who Exhibit Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Teachers with Culturally Relevant Practices...	Description & Characteristics
Have High Self-Esteem and a High Regard for Others	<p>Positive perceptions of self (dress, behavior, classroom appearance)</p> <p>See themselves as professionals (dress accordingly)</p>
See Themselves as Part of the Community, See Teaching as Giving Back to the Community, and Encourage Their Students to Do the Same	<p>Do not urge students to gain education as a means of escaping community</p> <p>Show/explain how students can give back to the community</p> <p>Create informal learning community within the classroom so students may build together</p>
See Teaching as an Art and Themselves as Artists	<p>Do not view teaching as a technical skill requiring minimal training</p> <p>Find ways to capitalize on strong feelings among students</p> <p>View planning as tentative – have the ability to adjust lesson(s) to engage students or keep the learning going</p>
Believe that All Students Can Succeed	<p>Avoid a deficit belief that failure for some students is inevitable</p> <p>Do not develop favorites or “pets” among students</p> <p>Encourage students to make declarations of success</p>
Help Students Make Connections Between Their Community, National, and Global Identities	<p>Have the ability to make connections between the class content and the greater community that students live in</p> <p>Find ways to make connections between the curriculum and students’ lives that illustrate representation of students’ culture</p>
See Teaching as “Digging Knowledge Out” of Students	<p>Believe that students arrive at school with certain levels of knowledge. It is the teachers job to get students to explore that knowledge and find achievement</p> <p>Must find ways to get to know students (talk to parents about the students, talk to students about their interests). Use this knowledge to work with each student</p> <p>Rethink curriculum to benefit the students in the classroom</p>

(Ladson-Billings, 2009)

community. Ladson-Billings (2009) explained that social relationships are important to the classroom because students will create social groups that they will compete within and learn from. Teachers and students must both learn from each other and find ways to effectively communicate and form relationships. The classrooms and teachers that are not conducive to culturally relevant pedagogy are commonly structured in a hierarchical model. In this top down relationship it is expected for the teacher to possess and distribute all knowledge while the students must simply receive and soak up what the teacher is offering. This idea is similar to what Paulo Freire (1970) referred to as the banking concept. Freire pointed out that this form of education maintains an oppressive relationship and does not give the student an opportunity to be creative or develop a “critical consciousness” (Freire, 1970, p. 73). Many times, the reason for incorporating this banking method stems from racialized assumptions about students of color. The result sees schools attempt to fill certain students with cultural knowledge viewed valuable by greater society (Yosso, 2005).

It is critical for culturally relevant teachers to be able to find a common language with their students. By doing so the teachers are accepting the notion that there is not only one form of communication style that may be present in the classroom and are stepping away from a hierarchical relationship (Gay, 2018; Hilliard, 2002). Table 2.5 explores Ladson-Billings’ (2009) findings regarding culturally relevant pedagogy and building social relationships. Table 2.5 also describes what teachers are doing in these environments that set them apart and what characteristics they possess that align with being culturally relevant.

Alignment Between Gay and Ladson-Billings

The previous section provided an introduction to culturally relevant pedagogy and the research of Gay and Ladson-Billings. This introduction acknowledged that subtle differences

Table 2.5*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Building Social Relationships*

Culturally Relevant Teaching and Social Relations	Description & Characteristics
The Teacher-Student Relationship in the Culturally Relevant Classroom Is Fluid and “Humanely Equitable”	<p>Relationships in the classroom are non-hierarchical and are not limited to formal classroom roles</p> <p>Teachers have a great comfort with literally switching seats with students to allow students to demonstrate meaning or understanding</p> <p>Students are formed into extended family groups and hold each other accountable and monitor group progress</p>
Culturally Relevant Teaching Involves Cultivation of Relationships Beyond the Classroom	<p>Teachers find ways to facilitate out-of-classroom interactions with students’ families (church, Girl Scouts, community organizations)</p> <p>Small groups join teachers for lunch in the classroom – used to build community, learn about students, foster relationships</p>
Teachers with Culturally Relevant Practices Are Careful to Demonstrate a Connectedness with Each of Their Students	<p>Teachers are “consciously working to develop commonalities with all the students” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 72).</p> <p>It is important for teachers to learn more about their students than just their names and birthdates</p> <p>Teachers use knowledge about students to develop an instructional plan that will motivate students and meet their individual and group needs</p> <p>Classroom walls are decorated with posters of cultural heroes and icons</p>
Teachers with Culturally Relevant Practices Encourage a Community of Learners	<p>Students need to care about individual success along with classmates’ success as well</p> <p>Avoid competitive individualism</p> <p>Teachers work to create “family” atmosphere within the classroom</p>
Teachers Encourages Students to Learn Collaboratively and to Teach and Take Responsibility for Each Other	<p>Student success is directly linked to getting help from and helping others within the classroom</p> <p>Rigor and challenge of work require assigned “Study Buddy” to be able to compete all assignments</p> <p>Learn to build up and improve surrounding community</p>

(Ladson-Billings, 2009)

exist between culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. Primarily, a mindset of pedagogy vs. taking a mindset of teaching separated the two. In looking at the ideas of the two scholars, we can identify several themes that align. Both scholars' work can be anchored around the three key propositions identified by Ladson-Billings. The following section will identify how the two scholars shared ideas related to academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, and what we can learn from this analysis. Table 2.6 provides a brief summary of the themes identified and the areas of alignment between the two scholars.

Table 2.6

Alignment Between Gay and Ladson-Billings

Theme	Major Areas of Alignment between Gay & Ladson-Billings
Academic Achievement	<p>The potential exists for academic achievement to be achieved across multiple subject areas</p> <p>Teachers should maintain high expectations for all students</p> <p>Teachers should incorporate strategies that align with students' cultural knowledge and maintain cultural connections</p>
Cultural Competence	<p>Recognize and validate students' culture in the classroom environment to foster student engagement</p> <p>Teachers use students' culture to tap into funds of knowledge to make the classroom less alienating and to acknowledge students' strengths</p>
Sociopolitical Consciousness	<p>Culturally relevant pedagogy should provide an opportunity for students to be freed from oppressive education practices and structures</p> <p>Teachers must maintain an understanding and knowledge of oppressive structures and practices</p> <p>Teachers use the classroom as a site to create and maintain social change</p>

Academic Achievement

As was discussed earlier, Ladson-Billings (2002) described academic achievement as one's intellectual growth and ability to construct knowledge. Ladson-Billings believed that there was potential for academic achievement to be achieved across multiple subjects and that teachers engaged with culturally relevant pedagogy should maintain this expectation for their students. Like Ladson-Billings, Gay (2018) shared similar ideas about the importance of student achievement. In discussing her ideas about social and academic empowerment, Gay related these aspects directly to student performance in the classroom (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2018).

An area related to academic achievement discussed by both Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) was teacher expectations. Both stressed the importance for educators to maintain high expectations for their students' learning and to ignore certain assumptions or stereotypes that had the tendency to reduce student abilities. One of these assumptions both spoke about was the deficit mindset. According to Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (2009), culturally relevant practices were designed to embrace the notion that students have the potential to become proficient learners. Acting on this idea, teachers must care enough about the process to identify students' strengths and facilitate growth (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (2009) also identified the need to maintain cultural integrity when stressing academic achievement for all students. Achieving student success was important, however, in doing so the teachers needed to ensure the students' cultural connections were not compromised or ignored (Gay, 2018; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Instead, educators needed to look for ways to incorporate strategies, materials,

concepts, and practices that will not be foreign to the students' cultural knowledge (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

One of the key areas where Gay and Ladson-Billings aligned was the area of instructional strategies. Both identified the importance for a variety of instructional methods to be used when engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy. This diverse pedagogical design is due to a plethora of learning styles being present within various classrooms. Educators would not be supporting high academic achievement if they attempted to only use a limited number of instructional practices (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Cultural Competence

The notion of fostering cultural competence within students was another shared concept between Gay and Ladson-Billings. Both scholars discussed the significance of recognizing and validating students' cultures within the classroom environment (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Gay and Ladson-Billings both acknowledged that affirming students' cultural identities was important in forming relationships and in improving student achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). By using culturally relevant practices, teachers can find ways to acknowledge the legitimacy of the different ethnic groups and cultures that make up the classroom. By implementing a culture of caring, and validating each students' culture, a safe environment may be created where all students have an opportunity to become engaged in the learning (Gay, 2018; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017).

The emphasis on cultural affirmation aligns with Ladson-Billings (2009) proposition of cultural competence. The focus on developing cultural competence provides an opportunity to develop connections between students' home and school experiences. By tapping into the funds of knowledge students already possess, teachers are able to make the curriculum less alienating

and more appealing to the students (Gay, 2018; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Sociopolitical Consciousness

Another area of alignment falls under Ladson-Billings' (2009) focus on sociopolitical consciousness. Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (2009) believed that culturally relevant practices should provide students with an opportunity to be freed from oppressive educational practices and structures. Each stressed the importance that the growth occurring in the classroom should foster the potential for societal transformation (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). By having an understanding of the various practices and structures that were currently oppressing students, families, and communities, teachers would become more adept in assisting students with this practice (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

The actions necessary to develop a sociopolitical consciousness lead to another area of alignment between Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (2009). Both scholars maintained strong commitments to social justice education. Through their research both acknowledged the importance of identifying the classroom as a site for creating and implementing social change (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). To maintain the level of sociopolitical consciousness professed by Gay and Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant education practices should be designed for the classroom, but also need to serve as the catalyst to push teachers and students out into the local communities (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Other Scholars in the Field

In addition to Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018), other scholars have built on the research related to culturally relevant teaching practices. Some researchers have maintained a strong connection to the work done by Ladson-Billings and Gay, and only made small changes

as they add to the empirical studies. Others have taken the work that was done and created new frameworks with different components of culture included. The following sections will highlight and discuss some of the additional research that was conducted around culturally relevant pedagogy.

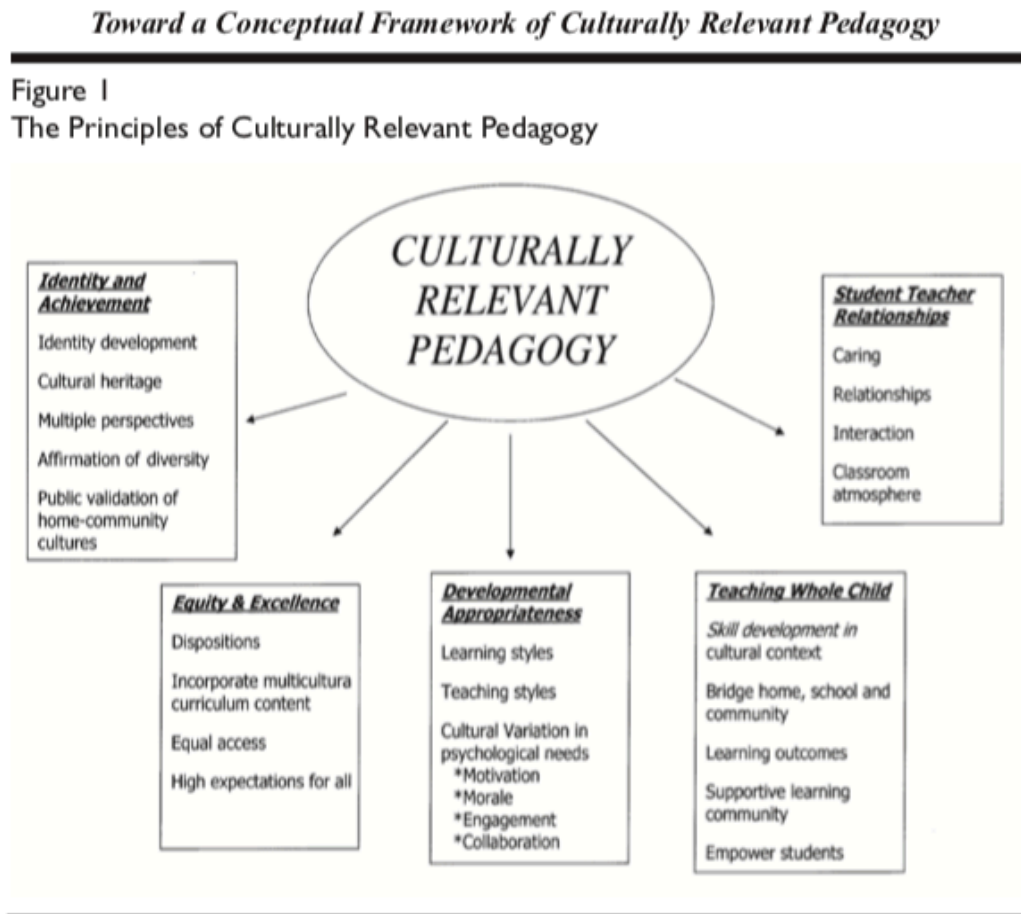
A Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In 2011, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper worked to create a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. The framework that was created consisted of culturally relevant teaching behaviors drawn from prior research. The authors used the work of Gay (2018, Culturally Responsive Teaching), Ladson-Billings (2009, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy), and Nieto (1999, Multicultural Education) to identify five themes or principles of culturally relevant pedagogy. The themes that were ultimately identified included: “identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 71). After analyzing prior research on culturally relevant teaching, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) initially identified 35 broad themes. They then combined related concepts to come up with their five principles. In addition to the research on culturally relevant practices, critical race theory (CRT) was used to help form the framework. By including CRT, race and racism remained a focus of the work. This was important to do considering the fact that the visual component of race too often shapes the view a teacher has of his/her students. By acknowledging race, and not simply hiding behind the veil of culture, a teacher would be challenged to recognize his/her own biases when working with their class (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the five themes identified by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011). In addition to the theme category, certain concepts are included to highlight certain actions and behaviors of the students and teacher.

Figure 2.1

Five Themes of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy



Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011)

Improvements to the Practice

In 2017, Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff provided an update on the progress of culturally relevant pedagogy. The analysis provided a check-in on culturally relevant pedagogy 20 years since its inception. While the research didn't provide any additional theory, it did identify some existing concerns that researchers and educators should be aware of. One of the areas identified was the extent of cultural knowledge possessed by teachers. By increasing the amount of cultural knowledge teachers possess, culturally relevant pedagogy would stand a better chance of being incorporated into more schools in the United States. This process begins with acknowledging that culturally relevant pedagogy is more than a series of how-to steps that teachers should follow. Furthermore, teachers must come to comprehend and accept various forms of cultural diversity. This includes, but is not limited to, appreciating the fact that there are different ways to complete learning tasks and to demonstrate knowledge, as well as alternative modes of communication patterns that can be used to deliver instruction (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Love, 2019; Milner, 2010). Milner's (2011) research showcased how a White secondary Science teacher was able to increase his cultural knowledge while working with students of color. In doing so, the teacher was able to gain a greater understanding of the cultural intricacies possessed by his students. To accomplish this, the teacher, Mr. Hall, "developed authentic meaningful relationships with his students; he recognized and attended to the significance of identity; and finally, he believed in community and collaboration, extending himself to all members of the school community, not just the students in his classroom" (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017, p. 15).

In addition to increasing the amount of cultural knowledge possessed by teachers, Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) explained the importance of moving theory into practice.

This was identified as an important step for both in-service and pre-service teachers. Instead of simply learning about culturally relevant pedagogy as part of a professional development session or through a teacher preparation program, the researchers claimed that teachers needed to have an opportunity to see the skills in practice. For pre-service teachers this may include creation of specific spaces for practice to take place. For in-service teachers this would provide an opportunity to observe and learn from others' classrooms or have an opportunity to practice in professional development sessions (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Stairs et al., 2012).

As mentioned, the work of Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) didn't add to the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. However, the analysis they conducted did acknowledge the need for the practice to be expanded to better prepare teachers for engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) cited that empirically, culturally relevant pedagogy continues to grow. The authors explained that future scholars who are looking to make meaningful contributions should expand culturally relevant work in the areas of: teacher preparation, evaluation and assessment, current reform efforts, and teacher ideology. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) believed that these areas were under-researched and expansion of the topics would be a benefit for theorists, practitioners, and policy makers. The suggestions made were not the only areas of need for additional research, but were identified as greater immediate importance.

Evolution and New Practices

As was previously mentioned, over the years other scholars have taken the work of Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) and created new frameworks. These frameworks were created, not because of flaws in a system, but because they needed to address a specific area.

Some of the new work was built with different components of culture or ways of bringing students' culture into the classroom.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy. Paris (2011) offered culturally sustaining pedagogy as an alternative to culturally relevant pedagogy. This alternative would incorporate past and present research and practice related to multiethnic and multilingual education. Paris believed the need for change related to the word choice used with previous scholarship. The terms relevant and responsive did not truly capture the type of teaching that they were founded on. Paris also believed that languages, literacies, and additional representations of culture should be noted and included.

In discussing the need for change, Paris (2011) explained how systemic inequalities against marginalized communities could potentially remove any value seen with multiethnic and multilingual societies. By only making teaching supposedly relevant or responsive, there is no guarantee that an educational program will maintain cultural heritages and allow students to be educated within a multi-linguistic or multicultural environment. The goal of culturally sustaining pedagogy remains to “perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2011, p. 93).

Ladson-Billings (2014) acknowledged the work done by Paris and supported the ideas of culturally sustaining pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (2014) pointed out that what one interprets as culture is constantly changing. As the definition of culture changes, scholars and practitioners must also be able to make adjustments to their understandings. Ladson-Billings (2014) explained that growth would cease to exist the moment we are so certain about our practice that we don't attempt to improve. With this assuredness, the students in our classrooms will suffer greatly.

Ladson-Billings (2014) reiterates that the idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy does not shift the focus of the student as it is implemented. As was seen with culturally relevant pedagogy, the student remains seen as a subject rather than an object. In maintaining this focus, Ladson-Billings pointed out the importance of not simply looking at culture as a part of a “nation-state, an ethnic group, or a religious group” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 2). Instead it is important to also take into consideration the culture of the youth. As is seen with other cultural groups, youth also maintain ideas of membership, along with common language, beliefs, and other practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Hip Hop Based Education. Hip Hop Based Education (HHBE) is another approach to research and education that incorporates components of culture into the learning process. HHBE is based around ideas common in critical theory and culturally relevant theory (Hill, 2009; Irby & Hall, 2011; Petchauer, 2009). HHBE utilizes more than just rap music as a way to inform pedagogy and classroom activities. Instead, HHBE incorporates the five components of hip hop (emceeing, or rapping; DJing, or turntablism; breaking, or break dancing; graffiti writing; and knowledge of self) along with fashion, language, and activism as a means to appeal to the experiences, values, and worldviews that impact students’ learning (Chang, 2006; Hill, 2009; Petchauer, 2009; Rose, 1994).

Hill (2009) pointed out that hip-hop culture’s presence in education is nothing new. The early 1990s saw increasing analysis of the music genre due to the rise of gangster rap. Hill explained that a large portion of the early hip-hop scholarship focused on potential relationships between rap music and social pathology. When not primarily focusing on questioning the morals of rap music, scholars were able to gain a greater understanding into the way hip-hop has an influence over youth. Hill also noted that hip-hop scholars in humanities related subjects

incorporated hip-hop texts as a way to explore formations of gender, race, and political economy. In addition to using hip-hop as a form of critical analysis, Petchauer (2009) identified teachers' attempts to achieve culturally responsive environments as another reason for the increase of hip-hop in education. Teachers found that by incorporating rap music texts into the curriculum it was a convenient means to reaching a more culturally relevant classroom.

Despite this focus on the musical aspect, hip-hop is more than just a musical genre. The creative nature seen within hip-hop along with messages within the music provide an opportunity for students to form their own identities that can then be woven into teaching and learning (Chang, 2006; Petchauer, 2009). Similar to culturally relevant practices, when incorporating HHBE it is important for the teacher to develop a greater understanding of the culture as a whole. Teachers who do not have a grasp on HHBE or a personal connection to the content are more likely to oversimplify the material and look past the complexity of the subject matter (Irby & Hall, 2011; Love, 2015).

When integrating HHBE, hip-hop as music has been seen to create a culture of resistance within urban youth. Acting on this, a teacher could then work with the students to develop a critical consciousness in analyzing their communities and the greater society (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). This is similar to what Ladson-Billings (2009) discussed, however, HHBE is using music and culture within the classroom for interpretation of various forms of oppression facing the students.

In addition to infusing the curriculum with hip-hop based content the teacher may also learn from the actions of a rapper or MC when interacting with their students. Emdin (2017) highlighted techniques such as call and response and the incorporation of movement, as practices that could govern classroom interactions. The teacher could also draw from the experience of a

rap cypher where each student knows their voice will be heard and their turn will not be interrupted (Emdin, 2016). These practices are drawing from the cultural knowledge and experiences of the students and allow for the classroom environment to value and empower the students (Hill, 2009).

Reality Pedagogy. Reality pedagogy is another methodology to teaching and learning that takes students' cultures into consideration. Unlike other practices, reality pedagogy focuses on "meeting each student on his or her own cultural turf" (Emdin, 2016, p. 27). The focus of reality pedagogy is to make the students' experiences central to the learning occurring in the classroom. Emdin (2016) explained that a slight reversal of roles must take place between the teacher and learners in this setting. By switching roles, the student is positioned as an expert of their learning and the teacher can learn about what practices will work best for them. As the teacher and students work together, they are able to co-construct an environment conducive to learning.

One of the key components of reality pedagogy is the notion that a grand narrative does not exist. Each student is perceived as having a unique perspective and they are given an opportunity to show that in the classroom. The teacher must avoid using preconceived notions or cultural stereotypes when observing the class. Instead of identifying the students based on their cultural identity, the teacher must gain a distinct perspective for each student and use this to develop their approaches to teaching (Emdin, 2016).

According to Emdin (2016), reality pedagogy is based on five tools (The 5 Cs). The teacher uses these tools in an attempt to help the students develop a greater consciousness about sociopolitical factors impacting their lives and their learning (Taher, Mensah, & Emdin, 2017). Reality pedagogy also acknowledges the practices used in communities outside of school and the

impact they have on the students (Emdin, 2012; 2016). Table 2.7 identifies and describes each of the Five Cs of reality pedagogy.

Conclusion

In the years since Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) first documented their research surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy several scholars have contributed to the growth of the practice. As was previously mentioned, the evolution of the theory was not done because of flaws in the system, but because of specific needs to be addressed. The combined contributions over the past 20 plus years have allowed for culturally relevant practices to educate students in a number of settings and to maintain cultural connections in doing so.

In the following section the focus will shift from theory to practice. The Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Research section will take a deeper look at the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and how it is being incorporated across the curriculum. The section will identify the impact culturally relevant pedagogy has on students and student achievement, which are both important factors for school leaders to pay attention to when working with culturally relevant pedagogy. To counter the perceived successes, the section will also acknowledge aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy that has been attacked by critics.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Research

What Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Is and What Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Is Not

Research surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy has provided additional detail about the practice. To understand culturally relevant pedagogy, it is important to identify exactly what it is as well as look at what it is not. In discussing what the fundamental aim of culturally responsive pedagogy is Gay (2018) explained that the practice must seek to empower a group of ethnically diverse students while focusing on “academic success, cultural affiliation, and

Table 2.7

Five Cs of Reality Pedagogy

Classification	Description
Co-generative dialogues	<p>Dialogues held between 4-6 students and the teacher (typically before or after school, or during lunch time)</p> <p>Conversations that create an opportunity for students to explain current barriers to their learning</p> <p>Teachers and students work together to co-create a plan of action for making improvements to the current classroom structure (environment, instruction, assessments)</p> <p>Outcomes from conversations will allow teachers to teach in a more culturally responsive way that meets students learning needs</p> <p>Each student has an opportunity to speak, and only one person may speak at a time (every voice is heard) (Emdin, 2012, 2016; Taher, Mensah & Emdin, 2017)</p>
Co-teaching	<p>One scenario for co-teaching is a role reversal between the teacher and the student. The student will teach the class of peers in a manner they believe is more culturally relevant and will assist with greater understanding</p> <p>Another scenario for co-teaching uses students who are strong in a specific area to teach another student in a one-on-one setting.</p> <p>The community mindset of not letting others fail is seen here</p> <p>By allowing the student to become the teacher the student is empowered and his/her knowledge is validated</p> <p>Teachers reflect on the delivery and attempt to replicate in future classes (Emdin, 2012, 2016; Taher, Mensah & Emdin, 2017)</p>
Cosmopolitanism	<p>Idea that all students feel an inherent need to be responsible for each other</p> <p>All students have roles within the classroom environment that allow them to have responsibilities that attribute to everyone's success</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities changed periodically</p>

Classification	Description
	<p>Focus on socialemotional connections in the classroom</p> <p>Plays into belief that a student’s emotional connection will lead to commitment to learning and commitment to greater classroom community (Emdin, 2012, 2016)</p>
Context	<p>Symbolic artifacts of significance are brought into the classroom</p> <p>Artifacts typically are objects from students’ lives that can connect to classroom lessons</p> <p>Finding artifacts requires teachers to go to locations where students spend time or experience things students’ experience (e.g., Visit neighborhoods, listen to music, watch TV shows/movies) (Emdin, 2012, 2016)</p>
Content	<p>Teachers allow for students to express content knowledge in nontraditional ways</p> <p>Teachers must dismiss the idea of controlling the class</p> <p>When challenged with questions that expose limitations of teachers’ content knowledge, the teachers must admit they don’t know</p> <p>Establishes understanding that even the teachers does not have all of the answers – shows students that the goal is not for them to just memorize material (Emdin, 2012, 2016)</p>

personal efficacy” (p. 142). Culturally relevant pedagogy must be viewed as something greater than a set of principles or practices pre-determined for the teacher. Instead, culturally relevant pedagogy must be part of a mindset that encompasses all decision making related to teaching practices (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Milner, 2011).

Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) cited Foster (1993) and Lee (2007) to point out that culturally relevant pedagogy calls for practitioners to develop a more socially conscious and progressive mindset when focusing on culture, learning, and diversity. According to Stairs et al.

(2012) this mindset includes high expectations for all students while incorporating classroom practices filled with intellectual rigor. In the classroom, using culturally relevant practices provides students with opportunities to collaborate and engage with other students while learning about each other's cultures (Stairs et al., 2012).

In understanding what culturally relevant pedagogy is, it is equally important to understand what it is not. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) as well as Ladson-Billings (2009) pointed out that culturally relevant pedagogy does not consist of a pre-packaged curriculum. The practice is not a simplistic way of teaching students with a series of boxes to check off to ensure completion. There are no how-to steps for educators to follow as they attempt to bring cultural relevance to the classroom. Teachers and school leaders who look for a boxed curriculum will fail to recognize the complexities of culture as well as the role that culture plays in students' learning.

In discussing ways that culturally responsive pedagogy can improve teaching and learning, Stairs et al. (2012) identified several practices educators should avoid when attempting to incorporate it into their lessons. When teachers add culturally relevant practices to their classroom, they must be certain that they are not lowering their expectations of certain students or only using lower level teaching methods. Teachers must also avoid curricular content that does not relate to the students' funds of knowledge or that does not respect their cultural beliefs.

The celebration of racial, cultural, and ethnic differences should be celebrated and acknowledged when incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) warned that these differences should not be "reduced to simplistic, symbolic, and meaningless tasks such as eating ethnic or cultural foods, dancing and singing songs, and reading folktales" (p. 61). Introducing cultural differences in such a manner does not allow students to

identify and analyze the inequities that are present inside and outside the classroom much less work to eradicate them (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Milner, 2017; Stairs et al., 2012).

Benefits of Using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The use of culturally relevant pedagogy has several outcomes that will benefit all members of the classroom community. Milner (2017) identified three outcomes from using culturally relevant pedagogy. The three broad categories identify that culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students, incorporates students' culture into learning, and creates classroom contexts beneficial to learning. Figure 2.2 expands Milner's outcomes to show greater detail regarding the impact that they have.

The benefits of culturally relevant pedagogy for students go beyond those identified in Figure 2.2. Cholewa et al. (2014) identified that culturally responsive practices create environments that provide an opportunity for marginalized students to succeed academically and psychologically. The authors utilized a relational cultural theory (RCT) lens to find that culturally responsive practices may serve as psychological interventions and help lead to decreased distress and an increased well being in students of color. This is an important component for overall academic success. The authors cite research that identified higher levels of stress, depression, and suicidal thoughts for students of color when compared to their White peers. When left untreated, these conditions may lead to greater problems linked to anger and behavioral outbursts. The implementation of culturally responsive practices allowed the students to be much more at ease in the classroom while feeling understood and validated (Cholewa et al., 2014).

Beyond a sole focus on benefits to the students, incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy can also improve teacher ideology. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017)

acknowledged that committing to learning about and using culturally relevant practices can help educators disrupt the common use of deficit-based beliefs to explain performance and achievement of students of color. By learning about the various ways culture influences learner engagement, cognition, and learning, practitioners can stop forcing certain practices on students of color in an attempt to get them to assimilate with the mainstream ways of being (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Rodriguez-Garcia, 2010).

Implementation and Outcomes

When implementing culturally relevant practices, the teacher should be deliberate in his or her approach and selection of tasks and materials. According to Gay (2018), the curriculum content that will be used should be selected and delivered in a way that is meaningful for the students in the classroom. While not watered down, the instruction should happen in a way that makes it easy for the students to comprehend the content. In addition to delivery, the teacher must also take into consideration the materials (i.e., textbooks, primary sources, outside resources and references) that will be used, the cultures and contributions of the students in the class, as well as an assessment of current knowledge (Gay, 2018). It is also extremely important for the teacher to recognize that there are many different practices and curricula that could be used for culturally relevant pedagogy. What works in one setting may not be an optimal choice for another setting (Gay, 2018). For school leaders, recognizing these factors will allow them to provide support to teachers and students when culturally relevant practices are being created in the classroom.

Figure 2.2

Outcomes of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	
EMPOWERS students to:	examine educational content and processes create and construct and deconstruct meaning succeed academically and socially see contradictions and inequities in local and larger communities
INCORPORATES student culture in:	curriculum and teaching maintaining it transcending negative effects of the dominant culture
CREATES classroom contexts that:	are challenging and innovative focus on student learning (and consequently academic achievement) build cultural competence link curriculum and instruction to sociopolitical realities

(Milner, 2017, p. 11)

How Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is Used Across the Curriculum.

Because culturally relevant pedagogy is not a canned curriculum, there is not one way for how it will look when implemented in the classroom. As research has pointed out, a lot of what the teacher uses and decides to use will be directly related to his or her current students. Of course, community context may remain the same from year to year, but as was previously mentioned, the teacher should not view all of his or her classes the same.

Over the years, researchers have attempted to identify what culturally relevant pedagogy looks like when it is used by teachers across the curriculum. Aronson and Laughter (2016)

conducted their research in a response to Sleeter's (2012) call for research regarding how culturally relevant practices are being used. The authors looked for studies that had used culturally responsive education and showed positive student outcomes. Their work synthesized research across the content areas of math, science, history and social studies, English language arts, and English as a second language. Brown et al. (2019) also identified some of the ways culturally relevant practices may show up when they studied urban elementary teachers' understanding of culturally relevant instruction after completing a specific professional development series. Milner (2011) studied how a White teacher was able to build cultural congruence as he attempted to show the different ways culturally relevant pedagogy was being implemented in an urban high school. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) also synthesized some of the research surrounding culturally relevant practices and what they looked like in the classroom.

Table 2.8 provides a snapshot of the research discussed in the previous mentioned articles. Each major subject area is listed in the left column and potential ways culturally relevant pedagogy can be used in that subject is described on the right.

Student Engagement

How Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Leads to Student Engagement

Recognizing how teachers are using culturally relevant pedagogy is important in understanding what it looks like in the classroom. It is also important to recognize how these practices are leading to increased student engagement in school settings. Byrd (2016) cited several researchers in acknowledging that there is a connection between teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy and an increase in student engagement.

Table 2.8*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Used Across the Curriculum*

Subject Area	How Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is used
Math	<p>Math concepts rooted in cultural and social justice experiences typically are more meaningful and are retained more (Gutstein, 2006; Leonard, 2008)</p> <p>Allow students the opportunity to incorporate problems facing communities similar to their own (or their own) when solving mathematical problems (Tate, 1995)</p> <p>Students can incorporate journal writing to make connections between mathematical situations and their lived experiences (i.e., purchases of interest). These practices showed an increase in students’ interest in math when self-reported as well as increased participation during in-class lessons (Ensign, 2003)</p> <p>Students’ and families’ knowledge and experiences can be accessed through a gardening project (focused on measurement standards). Multiple interviews revealed that students could engage in “math talk” and make personal connections to the content and their experiences. Concepts such as perimeter, area, square feet, centimeters were explored and identified (Civil & Khan, 2001)</p> <p>Lessons can be created to focus on controversial issues facing students (inequalities, discrimination) in both math and life in general. For example, in this study, students analyzed traffic-stop data which led to an acknowledgment of racial profiling. As a result of these lessons, students experienced a rise in test scores as well as an increased sociopolitical awareness (Gutstein, 2003)</p>
Science	<p>Scientific inquiry tends to work well with culturally relevant practices due to the fact students are able to construct their own knowledge and the collaborative nature of science in general (Johnson, 2011)</p> <p>Transformative Professional Development (TPD) framework is a guide developed to help teachers incorporate culturally relevant practices into their science instruction. Teachers incorporating the TPD model identified an increase in student motivation towards science materials as well as an increase in collaboration (Johnson, 2011)</p> <p>By analyzing Derrick Bell’s <i>Space Traders</i>, an urban middle school science class was able to determine how bias can affect science. The class was able to identify how larger societal structures may have a direct impact on the students’ everyday lives (Adams & Laughter, 2012)</p>

Subject Area	How Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is used
	<p>To engage in social justice initiatives, one science class conducted an analysis of a local river and studied how certain environmental problems and larger societal injustices were connected. Students were able to connect the content directly to their communities (Dimick, 2012)</p> <p>Science Genius B.A.T.T.L.E.S. (Bringing Attention to Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Engagement in Science) is a practice utilizing hip-hop music to validate students' culture. Through these rap battles, traditional assessment is replaced with a written rap or poem that showcases the content learned during the unit. Students have a choice to participate in writing a song/poem as well as the performance of the finished product (Emdin, 2016)</p>
<p>English Language Arts</p>	<p>Several studies identified using hip-hop pedagogy as a way of teaching and engaging students about issues impacting their communities. Through the use of hip-hop lyrics and by making content-related connections, teachers were able to give agency to their students to speak about certain struggles in their communities (Christianakis, 2011)</p> <p>One example used a high school senior English class's study of poetry as an opportunity to incorporate hip-hop music and culture to promote academic literacy and critical consciousness. The researchers used hip-hop as a genre of poetry to make the poetry analysis assignment more relatable to the students. As the study continued, students were able to make connections to traditional poems and rap music (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002)</p> <p>A middle school teacher could incorporate culturally relevant texts into the writing curriculum. The texts in one particular study were used to connect lessons to issues students in the class currently faced. Critical conversations were had to allow for the diverse student group to listen to and explore the viewpoints of their peers. This activity allowed students to feel empowered and opened them up to forming and listening to different perspectives (Robbins, 2001)</p> <p>When a teacher incorporates texts that acknowledge students' backgrounds and interests they are showing a commitment to caring for their students. This is one step towards increasing success in the classroom (Ortega, 2003)</p> <p>In a focus on student engagement and motivation, a teacher instructed students to identify a character from the text they were reading to identify with. The students were required to identify a character who's internal and external struggles aligned with the current struggles they were going through in their own lives (Hill, 2012)</p>
<p>Social Studies</p>	<p>Some teachers use their own sociopolitical awareness to engage their students in critical reflection. For example, a teacher who has strong views about the social injustices perpetuated in the curriculum could engage students in dialogue to identify varying perspectives and how they understand certain</p>

Subject Area	How Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is used
events (Esposito & Swain, 2009)	<p>One high school social studies teacher focused on teaching his students how to be critical thinkers about issues regarding race and power in the history of the United States. As the teacher presented course materials he included topics about institutional racism and oppression in an attempt to broaden the students' understandings of people of color and their contributions throughout history. The teacher also designed lessons around students' national identities and the influence of racism to help increase sociopolitical understandings (Epstein et al., 2011)</p>
	<p>A middle school teacher, teaching newcomer English language learner students, determined the state curriculum was too Eurocentric and decided to streamline the curriculum. This allowed the teacher to adjust the focus to be more global in an attempt to better reach his students (Choi, 2013)</p>
	<p>A U.S. History teacher in Boston created a curriculum that he felt was better suited for his students, including the 49 students of color. The curriculum he developed provided different perspectives of past events that were linked to his students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The teacher implemented various forms of inquiry to question certain issues uncovered in the curriculum (power, equity, and social justice) (Martell, 2013)</p>
	<p>A Chicago high school teacher incorporated workshops during a thematic unit in an attempt to develop more relevance for his students. The sessions incorporated analysis of hip-hop lyrics as a means to discuss social issues. The teacher facilitated critical discussions for the students to interpret the rapper's purpose in writing the songs. The students were then asked to create an alternative story of historical events. Howard Zinn's <i>A People's History of the United States</i> was used as a reference point for utilizing alternative points of view (Stovall, 2006)</p>

According to Finn (1989), engagement consists of how a student identifies and participates at school. In regards to identification, a student must develop a sense of belonging or worth in the school environment. A student's participation revolves around how they respond to school requirements, the extent that they are involved in classroom activities and extracurricular activities, as well as decision-making. It is anticipated that as students identify more with school their amount of participation will increase (Archambault, 2009; Finn, 1989).

Teachers who focus on culturally relevant practices are creating an opportunity for students to see their value and likeness in the learning process. Through culturally relevant pedagogy teachers are able to develop learning environments that are conducive to students' growth (Milner, 2017). By tapping into the funds of knowledge students currently possess, practitioners are helping students develop their own voice and perspective that will allow them to more thoroughly understand the world around them and provide an opportunity to more fully participate in the learning context (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Milner, 2017). As students' skillset grows, they will be more than consumers of information and will be able to engage in the process of deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge (Freire, 1998; Milner, 2017).

How Student Engagement Correlates to Success

Increasing engagement in the classroom is essential, but it is also critical to take a look at how the engagement can lead to student success. Howard (2001) pointed out that "creating stimulating and exciting classroom environments can go a long way in generating student interest and enthusiasm about learning" (Howard, 2001, p. 146). This enthusiasm, coupled with high expectations from the teacher, creates an opportunity for growth to take place. Sleeter (2012) identified multiple small-scale studies that made a connection between culturally relevant teaching and student engagement. The findings suggested that as a result of greater engagement, academic learning would follow.

As students become more engaged in what is taking place in the classroom, there tends to be a cascading effect that ultimately leads to them becoming better students and demanding greater success and challenges. Delpit (2002) explained that it is imperative for teachers to not dumb down the content they are teaching or to solely teach what is of primary interest to the

students. Instead, it is a responsibility of the teacher to identify what the students' interests are and to then build an academic program related to these interests. This practice will allow the students to become more engaged in what is occurring in the classroom. "When students' interests are addressed in school, they are more likely to connect with the school, with the teacher, with the academic knowledge, and with the school's language form" (Delpit, 2002, p. 45).

As students begin to feel understood and validated in the classroom, their sense of belonging can transition to academic success (Cholewa et al., 2014). Savage et al. (2011) identified that students who were the recipients of culturally responsive instruction tended to begin to see themselves as intellectuals. Howard (2001) shared qualitative research in which students' accounts highlighted the importance of having a stimulating learning environment and how increased engagement also led to an increase in overall achievement.

Impact of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy on Student Achievement

When focusing on student achievement and learning, a common focus point will be how students are performing on assessments. Whether utilizing data from standardized tests or classroom assessments, these results provide teachers an opportunity to see if implementing culturally relevant practices are making improvements in their students' learning. Despite the opportunity to assess learning through test analysis, proponents of culturally relevant practices might find fault in this practice. Stemming from beliefs that standardized tests are an oppressive system and simplistic, many find it unjust to equate students only with numbers (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Hilliard, 2002)

Regardless of the criticism surrounding use of test results to assess the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy, it is still important to look at how certain teacher practices may be

making an impact on student test performance. Research has provided numerous studies that have made connections between culturally relevant pedagogy and positive test score gains (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Aronson and Laughter (2016) cited research from Choi (2013), Duncan-Andrade (2007), Hubert (2014), Nykiel-Herbert (2010) and Rodriguez et al. (2004) as revealing a direct connection between teaching grounded in culturally relevant practices and an increase in positive test results.

Table 2.9 provides a glimpse of some of the results that have been documented demonstrating test score gains experienced by different teachers. Table 2.9 is broken down to showcase three different testing measures. The first column highlights the impact of culturally relevant teaching on standardized test results. The second column shows improvements from a teacher administered pre-test to a teacher administered post-test following a unit utilizing culturally relevant practices. The third column focuses on test results administered during a summer, university based outreach program.

Houchin (2013) studied how culturally relevant pedagogy could have an impact on state mandated reading tests. The study that was conducted identified a focus group of 9th-12th graders who were placed in a intensive reading class to prepare for retaking the state reading test which all had previously received non-proficient scores. The first group of students completed their retake after only going through 13 weeks of the program. The remaining students completed an additional 12 weeks, for a total of 25 weeks, and retook the exam in the spring semester. Houchin cited the work of Ladson-Billings (1995b) in organizing the program that was created. Culturally relevant pedagogy was merged with the framework of literacy theory to develop the following principles to inform practice:

Table 2.9*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Student Achievement*

Standardized Tests	Measurement Tool(s)	
	Classroom Pre/Post Assessment	Other
Study conducted with focus on 10 th grade, state mandated reading test retake.	A total of 37 students participated in the mathematics intervention	Study conducted over four summers at a university founded outreach program (four separate cohorts)
A total of 24 students participated (majority African American)	Five students were selected to participate as the subgroup for the research	Participants (10 th graders) attend for one six-week summer session
After 13 weeks of culturally relevant instruction, 13 students took retake exam. 58% passed with required score	16 hours of instruction was provided (divided up as eight 2 hour periods) Students in subgroup all completed over 50% of total hours of instruction	A total of 193 students participated over four years (46% Mexican American/Latino; 21% African American)
After 25 weeks of instruction, 6 students took retake exam, 66 passed with required score	Totals = 60% of the focus group showed improvement in scores from the pre-test to the post-test following culturally relevant instruction (Hubert, 2014)	Instruction provided Monday – Thursday during daily 2 hour sessions (three total sessions per day; different subjects); Friday consists of instruction in additional subjects, college preparatory seminars, and educational field trips
Totals = 84% of students passed retake of state exam after participating in culturally relevant instruction (passing rate was 190% higher than state average of 29%) (Houchen, 2013)		Daily instruction incorporates culturally relevant practices Overall scores for each cohort showed a significant increase in scores from the pre-test to the post-test (Rodriguez et al., 2004)

1) to create strong and caring relationships with students based on mutual respect and high expectations, 2) to access student thinking regarding their own learning needs and their cultural backgrounds to inform the curriculum, and 3) to teach metacognition and comprehension skills and strategies in multiple formats both explicitly and generatively. (Houchin, 2013, p. 98)

Shumate et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate the impact culturally relevant mathematics lessons had on the academic achievement of a group of Latino middle school students. The study was conducted in a resource classroom with five students who had all been diagnosed with specific learning disabilities. The results of the study showed that a modified form of culturally relevant mathematics instruction could be associated with increases in positive gains on classroom assessments. During the study, the participants were given a pre-test to determine their baseline performance on new mathematics topics. Following the pre-test, daily instruction was conducted utilizing culturally relevant practices. The participants of the study recorded the lowest correct responses on all pre-test assessments. However, when a modified form of culturally relevant mathematics instruction was incorporated, all participants showed the greatest gains from pre-test to post-test. The modified instruction model placed high importance on students working together in group activities. The activities that were used incorporated the use of manipulatives to provide students visual clues while working. The questioning and vocabulary selected for the lesson incorporated relevant language for the students. Cultural connections were made to students' lives and additional time was factored into the lesson to allow for culturally relevant discussions to help students further engage in the content and grasp a better understanding.

Similar to the research discussed by Houchin (2013), Hubert (2014) conducted a study with a subgroup of students placed in an intervention classroom. The differences compared to Houchin (2013), however, were that Hubert's (2014) study focused on mathematics instruction and involved classroom pre- and post-test assessments. In addition to focusing on quantitative data, Hubert (2014) also engaged with her students in a series of semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of their perspectives related to culturally relevant instruction. The mathematics intervention consisted of 16 instructional hours. Hubert ensured that students in the subgroup had been present for a minimum of eight hours of instruction. Each of the students was given a pre-test at the beginning of the intervention. The 16 hours of instruction focused on using culturally relevant practices to support the enrolled students. One of the primary practices used during the instruction was incorporating real-life issues into the math curriculum. Students studied data related to teen-pregnancy as well as teen-smoking while learning the mathematics concepts. Students were able to make connections to both topics and develop a greater interest in what was being taught. During this study the teacher also maintained high expectations for all students along with a great sense of caring. Following the eight two-hour sessions, each student was given a post-test. Hubert (2014) found that 60% of her students showed improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. When asked about the culturally relevant mathematics instruction, the students had positive feelings toward the teaching method and favored it over traditional methods of instruction. Students responded with multiple positive comments about participating in the intervention and reported that the culturally relevant instruction increased their interest in learning mathematics.

Rodriguez et al. (2004) demonstrated how culturally relevant instruction could lead to increased student achievement in a non-traditional academic setting. The study focused on a

university outreach program and sought to find out how students' engagement and competency in mathematics and science learning increased. The outreach program was initiated at San Diego State University and took place for six weeks during the summer months. During the six weeks, participants were exposed to an intensive math and science-focused curriculum. The instructional practices incorporated by program staff were consistent with those identified by culturally relevant pedagogy researchers. Specifically, there was an increased focus on creating a positive sociocultural context that would provide students with a safe environment where they felt accepted being themselves. Being placed in a culturally affirming environment with a diverse group of ethnic minorities allowed for the participants to develop a greater sense of confidence and feel empowered to contribute. The high expectations for success were also noted as being key components to the program. Rodriguez et al. (2004) analyzed quantitative data for the first four program cohorts. Each year the cohort size remained around 50 participants with a four-year total of 193 participants. The participants consisted of a culturally diverse group with the two highest participant groups being Mexican American/Latino (46% total avg.) and African American (21% total avg.). Female participants (54% total avg.) maintained a slight advantage over male participants (46% total avg.). The assessment that was given to all participants was the Test of Integrative Process Skills (TIPS), which focuses on mathematical and science thinking. Each cohort took the TIPS prior to their first day of classes and following their final day of instruction. Each cohort during the four-year period showed statistically and numerically significant increases in the overall pre- and post-test scores (See Table 2.10).

In addition to these studies, Langlie (2008) conducted dissertation research to identify if Black and Latinx students who were taught by teachers practicing culturally relevant methods would receive higher mathematics scores on standardized tests. The culturally relevant methods

Table 2.10*Test of Integrative Process Skills Student Results*

Year	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
1998	20.21	6.16	24.00	6.67
1999	20.16	5.22	25.30	5.73
2000	20.34	5.25	24.66	5.39
2001	20.25	5.65	23.82	6.63

(Rodriguez et al., 2004, p. 11)

acknowledged for having the greatest impact in this study were the teacher's ability to emphasize and demonstrate the use of mathematics in everyday life as well as form social relationships with students in and outside of the classroom. Langlie (2008) compiled data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study to assist in the findings. In conclusion, Langlie (2008) found that Black and Latinx students had higher scores on their standardized tests when their math teachers encouraged student success and incorporated math concepts of importance into the students' everyday lives.

Despite a collection of studies showing positive gains on multiple assessments, some researchers believe that there is more to learning than performance numbers. Although potentially open to criticism, Aronson and Laughter (2016) suggested expanding the idea of what achievement looks like when focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy. To focus solely on test scores does not do justice to the numerous benefits and positive student outcomes provided by culturally relevant practices. When implemented successfully, other academic skills and concepts will be developed leading to growth in the students' overall skillsets.

Critics of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a Practice

Despite the positive outcomes and benefits of culturally relevant pedagogy previously discussed, the practice does not go without its share of criticism. The criticism surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy ranges from a focus on the instructional practices used, all the way to what type of culture is being incorporated in the classroom. Instructionally speaking, critics of culturally relevant pedagogy find fault with the practice because they believe it does not contain enough depth or rigor. Others do not think it is reliable because there has not been enough empirical data related to the practice. A common belief is that by focusing on culture, educators are not able to focus on supposed culturally neutral skills like reading, writing, and math subjects (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017).

Some criticisms of culturally relevant pedagogy point out that the practice is only designed for students of color (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). These criticisms were discredited by Irvine and Armento (2000) when the authors showed that culturally relevant teaching was not a new practice and had been present in U.S. schools for years. The practices that had become commonplace were in fact relevant to the cultural knowledge of those U.S. born, middle-class, White students. The research cited above shows that the practice is able to work with any cultural group.

Some researchers have criticized culturally relevant pedagogy not for its incorporation of culture, but because of how it is incorporating culture. These researchers believe that the incorporation of culture in the learning should include a more in-depth sociopolitical approach while connecting students' experiences to what is taking place in the classroom (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lee, 2007; Nasir, 2002).

While not a direct critique of the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy, Sleeter (2012) did discuss concerns related to there not being enough research focusing on the impacts culturally relevant practices have on traditional forms of student learning. In an effort to prevent standardized programs from marginalizing culturally relevant pedagogy, Sleeter (2012) made the recommendation that there needs to be an increase in the amount of evidence-based research that identifies the connections between “culturally responsive pedagogy and student outcomes that include, but are not limited to, academic achievement” (p. 578). Sleeter’s recommendations initiated several studies, including Aronson and Laughter (2016), which would take a deeper look at culturally relevant education and seek answers to aforementioned concerns (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Resistance to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Implementation

In addition to those criticizing culturally relevant pedagogy, there has also been resistance to its implementation. Teachers attempting to incorporate culturally relevant learning practices in their classrooms face opposition from a number of sources. According to Gay (2013), the opposition “can range from rather benign ambiguities and uncertainties about engaging cultural diversity, to explicit rejection of its reality and value in education” (p. 56). The challenges faced when implementing culturally relevant practices may come from the individual teachers themselves, other teachers, schools, or the greater society.

One of the forms of resistance for implementing culturally relevant practices stems from doubts regarding its validity especially when the doubts have origins in deficit mindsets. Gay (2013) explained that it is common to find deficit perceptions about the students and greater communities of color. These perceptions tend to take away from a teacher’s recognition of student potential. For example, some teachers may discredit a student’s ability for learning based

on supposed dysfunctional living conditions. By subscribing to certain stereotypes teachers are creating a narrative that says the students will not be able to or want to succeed regardless of the instructional approach.

Another form of resistance to culturally relevant practices can be detected with implementation anxiety. The anxiety typically seen has to do with teachers being extremely concerned with difficulties they may face when attempting to incorporate these practices into their classroom routine. Some teachers have also identified that if they choose to highlight cultural and racial differences they will be viewed as racist (Gay, 2013). In addition to the concerns the teachers may have, schools and the greater society may also hesitate when presented with the possibility of these inclusive changes. Certain groups view ethnic and cultural diversity as a negative and controversial topic that should not be focused on in schools (Gay, 2013).

Some teachers may be hesitant to engage in practices considered to be culturally relevant. This may be related to the skills and knowledge they do not possess. Teachers' past experiences and preparation may have deprived them the ability to feel comfortable in teaching students who are not from middle-class, European American families (Gay, 2013). In certain situations, this lack of confidence may see teachers incorporating supposedly safer topics related to culture. These topics, which tend to be related to culture but are not focused on any inequities or major contributions typically focus on ethnic customs, figures, and holidays (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2013; Stairs et al., 2012).

While there are several sources of resistance to culturally relevant instruction being successful in a school, a key-determining factor to its success is school leadership. Khalifa et al. (2016) claimed that programs of cultural responsiveness have a greater risk of being short-lived

or disorganized if the principal does not promote them. Support from school administration may also alleviate some of the uncertainties faced and provided necessary training and support to ensure teachers are comfortable with what is being asked of them.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy – Centering Race

In addition to the basics of what culturally relevant pedagogy is and why it holds importance for students, research also explores the importance for centering race when learning about and implementing culturally relevant pedagogy. This allows for various human components and systemic forms of racism to be uncovered and interpreted through a social justice for education lens. Work can then be done to provide students with a more equitable learning environment and learning experience.

Before identifying the various forms of racism that exist within education, it is necessary to discuss the formation of race and how certain constructs have led to inequities facing students of color both while they are of public school age and well into adulthood.

The Formation of Race

Due to the permanence of White supremacy and racial ideology in the United States, race has been a longstanding organizing category for inequality (Omi & Winant, 1994). The formation of race in the United States is not scientifically based and is instead constructed by humans through various identifiers (Milner, 2017; Omi & Winant, 1994). Omi and Winant (1994) pointed out that race must be examined “as an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (p. 9). Gaining an understanding of this concept and the role it has had in various forms of oppressions and inequalities is important while working with youth (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The social components that make up race should be recognized, as should the influence they have on

students (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2006). Therefore, when discussing the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy, it is important to ensure that race remains an essential component (Milner, 2017).

In citing Nakkula and Toshalis (2006), Milner (2017) presented that race as a concept is a modern era creation that is used to formulate distinctions between individuals. These distinctions are frequently made in an effort to benefit a certain group while other groups consequently suffer. Considering this, Milner (2017) outlined multiple constructs of how race is defined or viewed in the United States. According to Milner (2017), race is a result of:

- **physical construction** – typically based on pigment of one’s skin. Physical constructions may vary between societies and are usually formed from people’s ideas surrounding characteristics of themselves and others.
- **social construction** – based on the information and messages a society produces over time to categorize individuals within the greater society. It is common for these constructs to shape individual thinking patterns about other individuals or groups in society.
- **legal construction** – Several landmark court cases related to education have had an influence on how race is constructed in the U.S. Cases and policies include: “Naturalization Law (1790), Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), Takao Ozawa v. United States (1922), Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and Brown II (1955), and Milliken v. Bradley (1974)” (Milner, 2017, p. 6).
- **historical construction** – Certain historical realities related to the treatment of certain groups of people has had a great influence over how race is thought about and

interpreted. A history of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and continued racial discrimination has impacted the construction of race in the U.S.

It is important to understand these definitions when examining race and the impact it has had in the development of various educational inequities (Gooden & O’Doherty, 2015; Grooms & Williams, 2015; Jackson, Sealey-Ruiz, & Watson, 2014; Petchauer, 2015). Table 2.11, presents statistics documenting some recent race-based patterns facing Black males and females in the United States. Unfortunately, similar statistics exist for Brown, Hispanic students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). While some of these inequities may be seen while students are of school age, the lasting impact is apparent well into adulthood. Identifying the patterns and discrepancies between students of color and White students is critical when discussing the role race plays in the education and future success of different students.

Racist Practices Impacting Schools

The inequities identified in the previous section did not simply happen by chance due to racial distinctions impacting certain students. The actions of schools, school systems, and teachers also play an important role. Milner (2010) detailed many classroom structures that are currently preventing teachers from implementing learning opportunities for all of their students. These structures include: teachers who believe in maintaining a colorblind approach, how the belief of meritocracy impacts success, culturally-based conflicts between students and teachers, and teachers who’s expectations for students are low and formed from a deficit mindset. Taking these patterns into consideration, and making the focus on race explicit, has the potential to better serve students of color.

Table 2.11*Race-Based Patterns Facing Black Males and Females in the United States*

Category	Black Males	Black Females
Education	59% of AA males graduate from HS (Schott Foundation for Public Education) versus 80% of White males.	21% of Black women hold at least a bachelor's degree, versus 30% of White women; only 2% of the degrees are in STEM areas (Guerra, 2013)
Employment	More than half of AA males between ages of 16-19 are unemployed or underemployed (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010)	41% of Black women are unemployed (Guerra, 2013)
Geography of Opportunity	More than three-fourths of AA children born between 1985-2000 grew up in "high challenge" neighborhoods, characterized by high levels of unemployment, welfare, poverty, single-parent families, segregation, and density of children under age 18 (Sharkey, 2009)	Poverty rate for Black women is 28.6% compared to 10.8% for White women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010)
Incarceration	There are more AA (mostly male) under correctional control today – in prison or jail, on probation or parole – than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began (Alexander, 2010)	Black women are three times more likely to be incarcerated than White women (Guerra, 2013)
Disciplinary Policies and Practices	50% of AA males in grades 6-12 have been suspended, compared to 21% of White males; 17% of AA males have been expelled compared to 1% of White males (Aud, et al., 2010)	35% of Black female students have been suspended, versus 9.7% of White females; 8.2% of Black females have been expelled, versus less than 1% of White females (Aud, et al., 2010)

(Data adapted from McGee (2013))

By maintaining a colorblind approach, an individual typically acts or pretends to act in a way that ignores race and racial differences as a whole (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Colorblindness takes on a form of racism because when one remains silent it legitimizes and refuses to stop current racist practices. Visible forms of racism are instead reduced to a good vs. bad binary (DiAngelo, 2018). As a result, colorblindness allows for systemic practices such as tracking and

student surveillance to be maintained while inequities are often replaced with individual-based rationales (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevarez, 2017).

The notion of meritocracy maintains the belief that everyone has an equal chance of being successful regardless of his or her social position, gender, race, or economic class (Au, 2016). Success will be based purely on hard work and individual merit (Au, 2016; Bonilla-Silva, 2014). When failure occurs, it is typically viewed as the result of lack of effort. Factors that may contribute differences in success, such as race, privilege, power, and status, are not taken into consideration (Au, 2016).

In addition to the practices identified above that rest on a human component, certain structural and systemic barriers are also present ultimately leading to Black and Brown students being underserved. Milner (2017) identified several areas in education where inequities exist. Table 2.12 highlights these areas and explains how Blacks in particular are treated within the discipline. Table 2.12 displays the disparities between students of color and White students when it comes to special education, student discipline, and gifted education. These biased and racist practices are far too common in too many schools that serve Black and Brown students (Milner, 2015).

Table 2.12 makes it is clear that today's educational system is not meeting the needs of certain students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner, 2017). In addition to exacerbating inequities seen in schools, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) claimed that the system is creating additional harm by reifying cultural practices and ways of knowing of the White majority. This creates problems for students of color because instead of viewing themselves as being potentially successful, they tend to accept the narrative that has been created about them.

Table 2.12*Educational Inequities Facing Black and Brown Students*

Category	Status	Description
Special Education	Over-referred & over-represented	<p>Black students... Receive special education services for mental retardation three times more than all other racial groups combined</p> <p>Receive special education services for emotional disturbances 2.3 times more than all other racial groups combined</p> <p>Have a greater chance of being educated away from their peers than students from any other ethnic group (Milner, 2017; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2009)</p>
Serious Disciplinary Infractions	Over-referred & over-represented	<p>“Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students” (Milner, 2017, p. 5)</p>
Preschool Suspension	Suspended at alarming rate	<p>Black preschool students constitute 42% of preschool students suspended once and 48% of preschool students suspended more than once – despite only making up ~18% of preschool enrollment (2011-2012 school year) (Milner, 2017)</p>
Gifted Education	Under-referred & under-represented	<p>Black and Latino students... Represent 40% of enrollments in schools offering gifted and talented education programs</p> <p>Represent 26% of students enrolled in gifted and/or talented programs</p> <p>2008 Advanced Placement (AP) exam statistics show the following percentage of students who took at least one AP exam: White students: 61%; Black students: 7%; Hispanic students: 13%</p> <p>2013 Statistics show the following percentage of students who earned any credit in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses (percentages do not guarantee an exam was taken): White students: 40%; Black students: 23%; Hispanic: 34%</p> <p>(Milner, 2017; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010, 2016; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014)</p>

Centering Race when Using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

As a result of the structural and institutional inequities discussed above (Anyon, 2005; Irvine, 1990; Milner, 2013, 2015; Payne, 2008; Siddle-Walker, 2000; Tate, 2008), students of color continue to be utterly underserved in schools throughout the United States (Milner, 2017). Because of this predicament, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) argue that implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy should be accompanied by a critical analysis of race and racism. By taking this approach, culturally relevant pedagogy will be able to acknowledge and make meaning of the experiences and stories of marginalized groups. By allowing other voices to be centered, Stanley (2007) argued that the master narrative of those already in power would not be the only voice recognized.

One of the reasons for the development of culturally relevant pedagogy was to respond to school settings where alienation results in an overall experience that is hostile to the student (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Milner, 2015). Each of the structures previously discussed can be directly related to the race of the student and the teacher. Now, considering a teacher may view race as a detriment or purposely not view it at all, it is important for teachers who are implementing culturally relevant practices to keep race as a central focus in their classroom (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner, 2017).

Utilizing culturally relevant teaching practices and centering race is especially important when working with Black students. Ladson-Billings (2009) identified that a detriment to African American students' learning is the constant refusal by teachers and administrators to recognize them as a distinct cultural group. The common belief in American education is that other than making up a distinct racial group, African American students are exactly like White students and

simply need a little more help (Hilliard, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009). According to Ladson-Billings (2009), the possibilities of distinct cultural characteristics or the various ways students are impacted by systemic racism should not be overlooked when pedagogical practices are assessed.

Additionally, Ladson-Billings (2009) explained the importance and implications of not ignoring racial differences between students. While many teachers, especially White teachers, may be uncomfortable acknowledging racial differences, it is an action that is critical for the education of all students. Ladson-Billings explained that many teachers may default to color-blind excuses, such as, “I don’t really see color, I just see children’ or ‘I don’t care if they’re red, green, or polka dot, I just treat them like children” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 34). The attempt of being a color-blind educator does not suggest teachers fall into conventional categories of being racist, however, their actions make them unconscious of the privileges or disadvantages some students face in the classroom. To be effective while working with all students, especially those of different racial makeup, a teacher must recognize that “different children have different needs and addressing those different needs is the best way to deal with them equitably” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 36).

In many instances, the importance of centering race goes beyond just looking at the students in the classroom. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) identified the importance in exploring the ways race consciousness and racial identity contribute to the ways in which one understands and incorporates culturally relevant pedagogy. To experience success, teachers must be able view themselves in racial terms and not merely assign race to others. Many times, White teachers are not aware of their own racial identity when entering the classroom, an action that allows them to remain oblivious to their individual privileges and membership to a greater group

(Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Gere et al. (2009) expressed the importance for White teachers to not only keep the race of their students in mind, but to also be able to critique their own race. By recognizing how their own race and racial experiences shape the curriculum, assignments, and assessments, they will be able to make the necessary adjustment necessary to demonstrate cultural responsiveness.

Conclusion

By recognizing the history behind the construction of race and by acknowledging that there is no scientific basis to its foundation, teachers can work to better serve their students. Nakkula and Toshalis (2006) explained that by exposing the myths of racial construction teachers could work with their students to form positive experiences surrounding their racial identity. With adequate preparation, teachers could also assist their students with a critique of the various societal and educational impacts racism has. Both of these practices are recognized within the practices of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Theoretical Framework – Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory Overview and Origins

Critical race theory (CRT) is a “collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). While CRT addresses similar topics as conventional civil rights and ethnic studies, it looks at these topics through a broader lens that takes economics, history, along with group and self-interests into consideration (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This allows CRT to maintain a focus on the effects of race and racism, while also concentrating on the dominant system and effects of White supremacy (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Chapman, 2013; Cook, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995, 2002, 2011; Dalton, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1995; Rabaka, 2013).

CRT materialized from critical legal studies, originally during the 1970s (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), and was “initially developed primarily by scholars of color who were concerned with challenging racial orthodoxy in the legal arena” (Howard, 2008). Concern was also present regarding the slow pace of racial reform during the post-civil rights period (Bell, 1992b; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2013). The creation of CRT served as an opportunity for legal scholars to have a critical space where conversations about race and racism could remain central (Crenshaw, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Additionally, CRT varies from critical legal studies in the sense that it is more radical and possesses an end goal of bringing about change while implementing social justice (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Chapman, 2013; Crenshaw, 1995, 2011).

Prominent legal scholars and early contributors to CRT include: Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Kimberle Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Cheryl Harris, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams. The early works of these scholars formed the basic beliefs and understandings that would form a foundation for the movement. In addition to the scholars mentioned above, scholars of other ethnic backgrounds have emerged and been key contributors over the past several decades. Some of the most notable Asian contributors include: Neil Gotanda, Mitu Gulati, Jerry Kang, and Eric Yamamoto. American Indian, Robert Williams, has also provided contributions to the topics related to CRT. A group of Latino scholars have also done a lot of work within CRT. Some of the more prominent Latino names include: Laura Gomez, Ian Haney Lopez, Kevin Johnson, Gerald Lopez, Margaret Montoya, Juan Perea, and Francisco Valdes (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Despite the large presence CRT has had in legal research (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 1995, 2011), it has expanded into other disciplines in recent years. The field of

education is one area where there has been an increasing focus on CRT related topics. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) are recognized as the scholars who introduced CRT to education during the mid-1990s (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 2013). Currently, CRT is being used as both a theoretical and analytical framework in educational research (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Solorzano, 2013).

Tenets of CRT

In working towards its ultimate goals, CRT was founded on several basic premises, or tenets. These tenets, which have each been explained in depth by CRT's prominent scholars, are the beliefs necessary to accept and participate within CRT work. Five key tenets, which will be discussed below, include: the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992a, 1992b, 1995), Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995), the critique of liberalism (Crenshaw, 1988), counterstorytelling (Matsuda, 1995), and interest convergence (Bell, 1995).

The Permanence of Racism

According to Bell (1992b), the permanence of racism stresses the belief that racism is permanently ingrained in American life and society. This idea is also referred to as racial realism and presents that in the United States Black people will never gain full equality. Bell (1992b) explained that recognition of this ideology would allow Black people to “avoid despair” and “implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph” (p. 374).

CRT scholars point out that to accept this notion of the structure of American society, one must view racism through a realist perspective. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), those subscribing to a realist perspective believe that racism as a whole is used as a means by society to distribute and organize status and privilege. Racial hierarchies have been created to “determine who gets tangible benefits, including the best jobs, the best schools....” (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2017, p. 21). To accept the permanence of racism, realists must recognize the influencing role racism has taken and continues to take in the United States (Bell, 1995; Brown & Jackson, 2013).

Whiteness as Property

A second tenet of CRT is the belief that Whiteness can be considered as a form of property (Harris, 1995). According to CRT legal scholar Harris (1995), Whiteness as property comes as a result of a long history of racism in the United States and legal understandings that have legitimized the role of race in society. Based on this notion, property may function through possession, use, or disposition. Whiteness as property may also be exhibited by one's right to enjoyment, the right of exclusion, and the right to transfer (Harris, 1995).

The tenet of Whiteness as property may be used when analyzing educational inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). An interpretation of the curriculum, and especially who has access to a "high-quality, rigorous curriculum" (Decuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 28), identifies that White students have been the primarily beneficiaries. By taking a look at Honors and Advanced Placement enrollment, it will be apparent which groups of students maintain the right to enjoy and which groups are excluded (Decuir & Dixon, 2004).

Critique of Liberalism

A critique of liberalism is another tenet of CRT. CRT scholars have a history of discontent with the idea of liberalism being used as a framework for focusing on the racial problems present in America. Scholars find fault with the fact that liberalism does not take a head on approach for solving these race-based problems. CRT scholars believe that "only aggressive, color-conscious efforts" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 27) will have results when it comes to making a change. Specifically, CRT scholars are critical of several liberal ideologies

including: colorblindness, neutrality of law, and meritocracy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Decuir & Dixon, 2004).

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), many liberals are comfortable with the notion of colorblindness or the idea that one does not or should not recognize racial differences. Liberals have a tendency to not focus on individual's histories or current situations and instead believe in equality and equal treatment for everyone. This is troubling when viewed through the CRT lens because colorblindness does not consider racism's permanence nor the structure that has classified people of color as others (Decuir & Dixon, 2004). This view makes it almost impossible to scrutinize how White privilege is established and how Whiteness has been normalized (Williams, 1997).

The belief in meritocracy states that if an individual makes the right choices and works hard, their effort will lead to success and their merit will be rewarded (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Subedi, 2013; Vaught & Hernandez, 2013). The individuals who overcome challenges and find success are those who work harder and are more ambitious. Bonilla-Silva (2014) compared this belief to the popular saying that "the cream rises to the top" (p. 80). However, in this instance, as Bonilla-Silva (2014) points out, "in the view of Whites, the color of the 'cream' that rises is usually white (p. 80).

Counterstorytelling

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the CRT tenet of counterstorytelling is a way of telling a story that attempts to uncover, or prove false, beliefs or myths held by the majority. Therefore, the new narrative that is being heard provides an opportunity to understand what life may be like for other people. By challenging the accounts of the majority, the practice of counterstorytelling provides a voice to marginalized groups and creates a way of "exposing and

critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 41).

In addition to American society as a whole, the benefit of counterstorytelling can be seen in education. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) highlight the various ways counter-stories are seen. By exploring personal stories, the stories of other people, as well as combined narratives, many different experiences can be explored. This use of storytelling is especially powerful for minority communities. The residents of these communities are frequently the victims of racial discrimination and are forced to endure in silence or blame themselves for their current situation. The use of counterstorytelling allows their voice to be heard and their experience to be valued (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Interest Convergence

The CRT tenet of interest convergence was discussed in depth by Bell (1995). This tenet explores the idea that the interests of Blacks will only be served when it aligns with the interests of Whites, particularly elite Whites (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Bell explained that White people would only make efforts towards achieving racial justice when there was a trade off that directly benefited them (Ladson-Billings, 2013). In discussing Bell’s ideas, Ladson-Billings (2013) highlighted the fact that interest convergence happens as a result of alignment and not altruism. Ladson-Billings pointed out that it couldn’t be an expectation that those in power will “make altruistic or benevolent moves toward racial justice” (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 38).

In keeping with the criticism of the Civil Rights movement, Bell (1995) pointed out that certain civil rights gains for Blacks should be interpreted through an interest convergence lens. Bell explained that these gains should be viewed cautiously, especially when certain rights aligned with the self-interests of Whites. To achieve more impactful results, civil rights activists

need to identify ways to align the dominant group's interests with those of groups who are racially oppressed (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Bell's (1995) discussion of interest convergence criticized the limited effort of the Supreme Court to undo the long history of racial discrimination in the United States. Bell's (1995) criticism was highlighted by his discussion surrounding the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark Supreme Court case. Bell's (1995) theory was that the decision in *Brown* was made more as part of a Cold War strategy and less because of humane feelings. As the United States fought against the Soviet Union in an effort to gain allies across the globe, it questioned the appearance of such a segregated society back home. In the eyes of many elites within the federal government, the *Brown* decision was more about the increased credibility in the fight against communism (Brown & Jackson, 2013). The outcomes of interest convergence reveal that Blacks will only make significant improvement against racial oppression when the result aligns with the interests of elite Whites (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Brown and Jackson (2013) point out that Bell's theory of racial realism developed from his principle of interest convergence.

Tenets of Importance For This Study

For the following study, four of the five tenets of CRT will be used for analysis. The permanence of racism, whiteness as property, critique of liberalism (to include: colorblindness, individualism, and meritocracy), and counterstorytelling will be used to focus on inequities currently faced by schools. Each tenet that will be addressed is discussed below through a CRT in education lens. The remaining tenet, interest convergence, will not be included in the analysis of the study. Considering the exploratory nature of the study, the researcher was more interested in being able to provide the district with an overview of what is perceived to be happening with culturally relevant pedagogy and not necessarily the ulterior motivation for why it is occurring.

The Permanence of Racism

Abandoning the notion that racism is only expressed overtly through individual acts of hatred will help recognize its presence in the educational system. Racism can be seen in an institutional form where it serves as an ideology operating covertly within society's institutions (Golash-Boza, 2016). Understanding this existence helps identify the normalization of how non-White students are treated in these environments. According to Bell's (1992b) theory of Racial Realism, the presence of racism in the classroom should come as no surprise. Racial realists highlight that racism is a means for society to allocate privilege and status. The racial hierarchies that have been created determine who gets tangible benefits and who makes the important decisions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Some examples include the disproportionalities that can be identified when analyzing student discipline data and placement in advanced courses. As was noted in the prior literature, students of color suffer at a higher rate when it comes to student discipline. In regards to advanced courses, findings show that there is a low population of students of color enrolled in these courses.

In the field of education, schools and school districts implement the policy decisions that potentially carry out institutional racism. Similar to what was detailed in Bell's (1992a) *Space Traders*, the Black students are not given an opportunity to share their views in regards to their education and decisions are subsequently made for them.

Whiteness as Property

In their discussion of critical race theory in education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) acknowledged that despite space constraints, several examples of Harris' (1995) analysis of Whiteness as property could be seen in the field of education. Specifically, the authors focus on what Harris (1995) terms the "property functions of whiteness" (p. 281) and how these functions

parallel certain inequities currently faced in today's schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

These functions include: the rights of disposition, the rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and one's absolute right to exclude (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Rights of Disposition. In discussing this function, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recognize that the physical transfer of Whiteness does not define this form of property. Instead, when Whiteness is bestowed upon students the transfer of White property occurs. For example, students' behavior or performance may be rewarded when it conforms to Eurocentric or White practices and norms. On the other hand, students may face certain repercussions when they engage in "cultural practices (e.g., dress, speech patterns, unauthorized conceptions of knowledge)" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) that do not comply with what is perceived to be acceptable.

Rights to Use and Enjoy. Harris (1995) explained that when an individual possesses property, they also possess the right to use and enjoy the property. Because Whiteness is both used as a part of identity and as a property interest, it may be experienced as well as used as a resource (Harris, 1995). By using and enjoying Whiteness, an individual is able to take advantage of the various forms of privilege that accompany this form of property (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In an education setting, these social, cultural, and economic privileges may be seen as property through tangible resources available for certain students' use or through the structure of the selected curriculum. Students of color may not have open access to the same resources and learning opportunities as their White counterparts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Reputation and Status Property. This function of Whiteness as property originated from the historical belief that a social hierarchy existed based on race. Several legal proceedings during the 1950s upheld this belief and reinforced the idea that an individual's reputation based on Whiteness could be viewed as a form of property and was valued in the market (Harris, 1995). Therefore, if an individual's reputation was damaged, so too was an extent of his or her personal property. In regards to race, levels on the social hierarchy falling below Whiteness, were perceived to have less value. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) discussed that "to identify a school or program as nonwhite in any way is to diminish its reputation or status (p. 60). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) continued to explain that programs that do not follow the Eurocentric, White-normalized model may be viewed as having lower status or the potential to ruin a perceived reputation.

The Absolute Right to Exclude. In addition to the rights to use and enjoyment of certain privileges associated with being White, Whiteness as property provides the right to exclude others from enjoying these privileges (Harris, 1995). Within schools, the absolute right to exclude is seen in a number of ways. Students of color may be subject to certain resegregation practices like tracking, overrepresentation in special education programs, and disproportionate disciplinary practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner, 2017). In addition, students of color may also be excluded from certain school-based opportunities, honors programs, and advanced level classes (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critique of Liberalism

Colorblindness. The concept of colorblindness can be devastating in an education setting. According to Gotanda (1991), when the colorblind lens is used, race becomes irrelevant. Those practicing colorblindness make attempts to avoid diversity in an effort to replace it with

homogeneity (Ladson-Billings, 1998). By not acknowledging race, an educator is essentially ignoring the lived experiences that a student brings with them to the classroom (Kohli et al., 2017). Educators in these settings typically believe that all students learn the same way and that it is up to the student to put in the effort for success.

In addition to ignoring systemic barriers that may impact a student, the colorblind approach also ignores and potentially takes away the value of culture-race (Gotanda, 1991). Gotanda (1991) defines culture-race as “all aspects of culture, community, and consciousness. The term includes, for example, the customs, beliefs, and intellectual and artistic traditions of Black Americans, and institutions such as Black churches and colleges” (Gotanda, 1991, p. 56). By leaving out these funds of knowledge, educators are missing key opportunities for reaching their students and helping them achieve excellence. In the classroom, these aspects of culture can help validate students and recognize their presence. A teacher who takes the time to learn about these components is essentially developing a greater cultural knowledge of their students and isn't attempting to teach every child the same.

Meritocracy and Individualism. The meritocratic view that hard work and effort are the sole keys to success attempts to rationalize academic failure (Au, 2016). This approach, that does not take race, gender, culture, or class into consideration, can be dangerous and can create a situation that attempts to justify Blacks' position at the bottom and inferiority to Whites (Crenshaw, 1995). Meritocracy also doesn't take opportunity or lack of opportunity into consideration. This view tends to solely focus on the end result with hard work being the logical explanation.

As Whites experience success and Blacks and Browns do not, students of color may be viewed as unambitious and incapable of achieving success. It is even possible through this lens

that Whites will be believed to have a better work ethic than Blacks and Browns (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Crenshaw, 1995). Through the justification of these academic disparities, racial oppression is rationalized as the norm and these barriers to learning remain in place (Crenshaw, 1995).

The importance of individual effort and its contribution to success relates to the liberal belief of individualism. Donnor (2013) mentions how individualism should be seen as a racial code word that advances “the self-interests and racial privileges of Whites over the educational needs of non-Whites, especially African-Americans” (p. 196). He claims Whites use the mythic belief of individualism to justify the inequitable educational status quo. Because Whites have more power, the focus on individual choice will allow them to maintain their dominance. The tools and technologies available have been selected and established to serve the White individual (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

Counterstorytelling

One way to challenge the oppressive narrative is to provide Black and Brown students an opportunity to tell their story. These students have been forced to adhere to institutional constraints and are expected to maintain obedience. Most are viewed through a deficit lens and their contributions are being ignored. These prevailing mindsets allow the dominant group to justify the world as it is while keeping non-White students silenced (Delgado, 1989). When narratives from subordinated groups are allowed, a new reality is created. This reality provides an effective means of overcoming otherness. By sharing the counterstory, an opportunity is created for students to share their story and to recognize that it is valued. The point of storytelling should not be to “vent or rant” about one’s own struggle, but should seek to have multiple perspectives validated and accepted (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 42). This is especially true for perspectives that differ from the dominant group (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

In citing Bonilla-Silva (2014) and Tatum (1997), Howard (2008) discussed the importance of listening to the counterstory. By avoiding conversations about race our students will be led to believe that a colorblind society is now a reality. This view is problematic for our marginalized students. By ignoring race we are ignoring them and keeping their voices silenced which will lead to them being excluded from schools and society (Howard, 2008). These students must be provided with an opportunity to share their reality to allow for any contradiction or confirmation to occur.

Conclusion

By recognizing and working within the major tenets of Critical Race Theory, scholars can explore the history of group racial relationships and recognize the role White supremacy has had on these relationships. Accepting the tenets of the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, the critique of liberalism, counterstorytelling, and interest convergence, will provide scholars with the tools necessary to transform the relationship of race, racism, and power.

CRT's work is also necessary within the field of education. Centuries of structural inequities have created situations within schools that are not conducive to learning for marginalized populations. Without action, these student groups will continue to suffer. The following study will engage with four of the five tenets as the researcher explores teacher and student perceptions regarding the extent that culturally relevant pedagogy is present within the district.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Rationale and Description of Design

For this study, the researcher used exploratory research to take a precursory look at culturally relevant practices within a suburban/rural school district. The study looked at what extent middle and high school teachers in Cooper County School District perceive they are incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy in their daily practices. This research had not been previously conducted in this district and the potential results were unknown. According to McMillian and Schumacher (2006), exploratory research tends to explore phenomena that have not previously been examined. As a result, the research is conducted in new areas of inquiry. Stebbins (2012) explained that researchers select to explore when there is “little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine” (p. 5). Despite having little knowledge about the subjects, the researchers still believe there is something worth learning from conducting a study.

Davies (2011) pointed out that when approaching exploratory research, the researcher does not follow any set formula. The process the researcher follows will be one of continuous discovery and will ultimately lead to new theory being developed from the data. In the case of this study, there was no hypothesis or current understanding of teachers’ perceptions related to culturally relevant pedagogy. The school district asked for a study to take place and the work of the researcher remained exploratory in nature.

Conducting exploratory research allows for new concepts and generalizations about the topic to be identified (Given, 2012). Given (2012) cited the importance of open-ended data in the

creation of these new concepts. The author explained that as data is collected, new ideas emerge and allow for additional discovery to take place. The open-ended nature of the data provided the researcher in this study the flexibility to offer suggestions to the district based on the study's findings.

Research Questions

Keeping the design of the study in mind, the following research question and sub research questions directed the investigation, with specific attention paid to the practices regarding culturally relevant pedagogy:

- Research Question: Are the middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom practices? If so, which ones and how?
- Sub Research Question #1: What are teachers' perceptions of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant teaching strategies?
- Sub Research Question #2: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?
- Sub Research Question #3: How do the perceptions of the teachers align and/or deviate from the perceptions of the students?

Table 3.1 includes an overview of how the research question and sub research questions align with the discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy discussed in the literature review and the theoretical framework of critical race theory.

Study Site

Cooper County School District (CCSD) is the pseudonym for a small, suburban/rural school district serving approximately 9,000 students located in the southeast United States. The

Table 3.1

Research Question and Framework Alignment

Research Question	Lit Review and Framework
Research Question: Are the middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom practices? If so, which ones and how?	Critical Race Theory: Permanence of Racism
	Critical Race Theory: Whiteness as Property
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Academic Achievement
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Cultural Competence
Sub Research Question #1: What are teachers' perceptions of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant teaching strategies?	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Socio-political Consciousness
	Critical Race Theory: Whiteness as Property
	Critical Race Theory: Critique of Liberalism
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Academic Achievement
Sub Research Question #2: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Cultural Competence
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Socio-political Consciousness
	Critical Race Theory: Whiteness as Property
	Critical Race Theory: Critique of Liberalism
	Critical Race Theory: Counterstorytelling
Sub Research Question #2: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Academic Achievement
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Cultural Competence
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Socio-political Consciousness

Research Question	Lit Review and Framework
Sub Research Question #3: How do the perceptions of the teachers align and/or deviate from the perceptions of the students?	Critical Race Theory: Permanence of Racism
	Critical Race Theory: Whiteness as Property
	Critical Race Theory: Critique of Liberalism
	Critical Race Theory: Counterstorytelling
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Academic Achievement
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Cultural Competence
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Socio-political Consciousness

district currently has fewer than 20 schools (K-12). The make up of schools within CCSD is 6 elementary, 5 K-8, 3 middle (with one including grades 5-8), and 5 high school (3 traditional, one with an early college focus, and one alternative). The 2018-2019 District Profile reveals an 88.5% graduation rate for all students, a statistic that exceeds the state average of 87.7%. The 2018-2019 school year reported a total of 594.45 teachers working in the entire district.

Table 3.2 provides a break down of the student racial characteristics of each of the middle schools and high schools in CCSD that were included in this study. Each of the schools has been provided with a pseudonym. The table provides the total number of students enrolled in each of the schools along with the number of students belonging to each of the identified racial groups and the percentage of the total population the group makes up.

In the fall of 2020, CCSD approached the researcher about conducting a study focused on the extent of culturally relevant practices being incorporated by teachers within the district.

Table 3.2*Student Racial Distribution of CCSD's Middle and High Schools*

		Ashley Lane High School	Burton High School	Knight High School	Davis Middle School	Palt Middle School	Sylvester Middle School
Total Students		396	851	1455	601	468	683
African American	#	31	98	161	84	102	39
	%	7.83	11.52	11.07	14.0	22.0	6.0
Hispanic	#	45	530	265	432	77	128
	%	11.36	62.28	18.21	72.0	16.0	19.0
White	#	309	195	916	71	249	450
	%	78.03	22.91	62.96	12.0	53.0	66.0

Given the collaborative relationship formed between district level administration and the researcher, access to teachers and students for this study was not perceived to be a problem. District level administration volunteered to assist the researcher in distributing materials and connecting with potential participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

To address the research question and sub research questions and to explore what might be taking place within the district in regards to culturally relevant pedagogy, several forms of data were collected and analyzed from a variety of sources. Teachers' perceived practices and approaches were identified through responses to a 15-item questionnaire as well as semi-structured interviews. Student perceptions of teachers' practices were gathered through a student questionnaire. School-based student performance data from a five-year range was analyzed to identify any relationships and/or disparities in subgroup scores and any possible trends over time. In addition, the review of literature and empirical research regarding culturally relevant pedagogy was compared to the practices currently being identified by teachers within the district. See Table 3.3 for a summary of data collection sources and analysis methods.

Table 3.3*Summary of Data Collection Sources and Analysis Methods*

Data Collection Source	Analysis Method
Questionnaire	148 teachers from CCSD completed a questionnaire that aimed to identify which, if any, components of culturally relevant pedagogy they perceive are being included in daily planning and instruction.
Analyze School Data	School data was analyzed from each of the middle, high, and K-8 schools in CCSD. The data selected was End-of-Course test performance data, advanced course participation, and in-school and out of school suspension data. This data was analyzed to identify any gaps between student subgroups and the relationship between the data and the interview and/or questionnaire responses.
Teacher Interviews	12 teachers from CCSD's middle and high schools were interviewed to look at teacher perceptions related to their abilities to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy.
Student Questionnaire	The school district created a questionnaire and distributed it to select students. The researcher was provided with 194 student responses to the questionnaire for secondary data analysis. The questionnaire was similar to the one given to the teachers and asked about how their teachers engage in culturally relevant practices.
Crosswalk and Ranking System	This crosswalk highlighted the components of culturally relevant pedagogy identified in the literature review and compared how teachers' perceptions and students' perceptions align with the topic. For each component identified, a rating was assigned to determine the extent to which perceptions of the current practices within CCSD align with national research.

Questionnaire

To gain an understanding of what teachers throughout the district perceive they are doing in their classrooms and how these practices align with culturally relevant pedagogy, a

questionnaire was provided to all teachers in CCSD. The questionnaire was accessed through a Google Forms link and all teachers were given the link and asked to complete the questionnaire during September 2021. The link was provided by CCSD district level administration to each school for distribution to individual teachers. This 15-item questionnaire was created based on the work of Rhodes (2017) and Hsiao (2015) and provided an overview of what teachers believe they are currently doing. The selected questions were aligned with the research questions (Table 3.4) as well as the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and culturally relevant pedagogy (Table 3.5) and items were selected based on the various components of relevance to this study.

The items of the questionnaire (See Appendix A) sought to identify the participants' perceptions of their frequency of use of various practices. Participants were instructed to read the descriptors for each item (e.g., I make an effort to get to know my students' families and backgrounds) and then select one response from the five options provided: *never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *usually*, and *always* (Rhodes, 2017). When completing analysis of the questionnaire responses, a rating scale (described below) will be used to create an overall rating of the perceived amount of evidence that culturally relevant strategies may currently be present in classrooms throughout the district.

The final question of the questionnaire asked teachers if they were willing to participate in one-on-one interviews to gather additional information from them. Teachers were asked for contact information and were informed that, if randomly selected, the researcher would contact them directly.

School Data Analysis

School performance data for the past five years was analyzed for each of the middle schools, high schools, and K-8 schools within the school district. This analysis focused on

Table 3.4*Research Question and Data Collection Alignment*

Research Question	Data Collection Forms & Protocols	# Aligned to
Research Question: Are the middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom practices? If so, which ones and how?	Questionnaire	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15
	School Data Analysis	N/A
	Teacher Interviews	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Sub Research Question#1: What are teachers' perceptions of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant teaching strategies?	Questionnaire	1-15
	School Data Analysis	N/A
	Teacher Interviews	1-15
	Student Questionnaire	N/A
Sub Research Question #2: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?	Questionnaire	N/A
	School Data Analysis	N/A
	Teacher Interviews	N/A
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Sub Research Question #3: How do the perceptions of the teachers align and/or deviate from the perceptions of the students?	Questionnaire	2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13
	School Data Analysis	N/A
	Teacher Interviews	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15
	Student Questionnaire	1-13

subgroup performance data and provided comparisons between how White and Asian students are performing in comparison to Black and Hispanic students. This analysis was used to identify performance disparities between the subgroups as well as any trends over time. Specifically, the

Table 3.5*Framework and Data Collection Alignment*

Lit Review & Framework	Data Collection Forms & Protocols	# Aligned to
Critical Race Theory: Permanence of Racism	Questionnaire	2, 11
	School Data Analysis	Yes
	Teacher Interviews	1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 15
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Critical Race Theory: Whiteness as Property	Questionnaire	1-15
	School Data Analysis	Yes
	Teacher Interviews	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Critical Race Theory: Critique of Liberalism (Colorblindness, Meritocracy/Individualism)	Questionnaire	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 15
	School Data Analysis	
	Teacher Interviews	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Critical Race Theory: Counterstorytelling	Questionnaire	7, 9, 12
	School Data Analysis	
	Teacher Interviews	
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Academic Achievement	Questionnaire	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15
	School Data Analysis	Yes
	Teacher Interviews	1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14
	Student Questionnaire	7, 10, 11, 12

Lit Review & Framework	Data Collection Forms & Protocols	# Aligned to
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Cultural Competence	Questionnaire	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15
	School Data Analysis	
	Teacher Interviews	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14,
	Student Questionnaire	1-13
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Socio-Political Consciousness	Questionnaire	6
	School Data Analysis	
	Teacher Interviews	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15
	Student Questionnaire	13

analysis sought to identify if the gaps between subgroups at identified schools were widening, closing, or staying the same. The data for the high schools included End-of-Course test scores in English II, Math I, Math III, and Biology, as well as participation in AP and IB programs, and school-wide in-school suspension (ISS) and out of school suspension (OSS) data. The End-of-Course test subjects were selected based on data reported on the annual Department of Public Instruction school report card. The data for the middle schools and K-8 schools included End-of-Grade test scores in Math, Science, and Reading, as well as school-wide in-school suspension (ISS) and out of school suspension (OSS) data.

Teacher Interviews

In addition to asking teachers to complete the questionnaire, the researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers from the middle and high schools. Since the study focused on teachers' perceptions of current practices, the interviews were limited to classroom teachers. The researcher completed a total of 12 interviews.

To engage with teachers and study the perceptions they have, it was determined that conducting individual, semi-structured interviews was the best fit. By conducting these interviews the researcher was able to establish a context for each teacher and develop a greater understanding for their teaching experience and practices. Recognizing that the time commitment for these interview sessions may be a limiting factor to some participants, the researcher provided an option to all participants selected to interview. Participants were able to choose between one interview session lasting 60-90 minutes or two to three shorter interview sessions lasting 20-30 minutes per session.

Taking each teacher's time into consideration, the interview questions were emailed to all participants ahead of time so they were prepared. The option was also provided for individual teachers to email their responses back to the researcher prior to the scheduled interview. None of the teachers participating in the interviews decided to email their responses to the researcher.

Given the constraints and limitations posed by the global pandemic, the researcher offered flexibility in the selection of the interview method used. The participants had the option of conducting the interviews over the phone or through a virtual platform (i.e., Zoom or Google Meet). All interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The interview transcriptions were then coded for common themes related to critical race theory and culturally relevant pedagogy.

The semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were aligned to the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and culturally relevant pedagogy (See Table 3.5). The questions, which draw from the work of Parsons (2006), Ellis (2018), and Richards (2017), avoid specifically naming culturally relevant pedagogy and/or the components teachers exhibit in culturally relevant classrooms. Instead, the participants were asked more indirect questions in an

effort to receive more authentic, unbiased responses. For reference, the questions and interview protocols are listed in Appendix B.

Student Questionnaire

An additional method that was used to collect data for this study was student questionnaires. During the Fall 2021 semester, CCDS distributed questionnaires to select students in the district's high schools. The researcher conducted a secondary analysis of the data collected by the district from the questionnaire. The data collected by the district provided the researcher with an ideal opportunity to explore student voice and see how it compared to teacher perceptions. Appendix C includes the questions that were included in the district's student questionnaires. The questions were aligned to the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and culturally relevant pedagogy (See Table 3.5).

Crosswalk and Ranking System

Upon completion of the data collection and analysis a ranking system was used to determine the extent that the researcher considered the self-identified practices and perceptions of teachers aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy research. Table 3.6 provides an overview of the ranking system (Brown et al., 2020) that was used. A definition of each rating is provided along with a ranking code that was assigned to each component that was rated. The rankings range from "Little Evidence" that a criterion is apparent to "Strong Evidence" that a criterion is obviously identifiable throughout the teachers' account of their practices. The criterion that was assessed was made up of three main components of culturally relevant pedagogy: academic achievement, cultural competency, and socio-political consciousness. The literature review has discussed what these components look like when incorporated into a teacher's practices. This information was juxtaposed with the responses shared by the teachers and students.

Table 3.6*Rankings, Definitions and Codes*

Ranking	Ranking Definition	Ranking Code
Little Evidence	Criteria is either not ascertained at all or only small amounts are ascertained throughout program components	LE
Evidence	Criteria is ascertained to some degree throughout program components	E
Strong Evidence	Criteria is obviously ascertained and fully developed throughout program components	SE

Limitations and Delimitations

In conducting the study, the researcher understood that there were certain factors outside of the control of the researcher that influenced the outcome of the findings. Keeping that in mind, the researcher identified the following limitations and delimitations for the study.

Limitations

- Exploratory in nature – The study was very exploratory in nature. There was not a hypothesis to test through the collection and analysis of data. Instead, the study was seeking to find out what teachers in CCSD said they were currently doing in regards to culturally relevant practices.
- Not an isolated intervention – The teachers who decided to complete the questionnaire and participate in the interviews responded to an open invitation and were not selected individually by the researcher.

- Interpretation – Because the teachers who participated in the interviews were not directly asked if they are implementing culturally relevant practices in their classrooms, the responses were open to the researcher’s own interpretation. Despite the careful selection process of questions, the interpretation of responses still allowed for researcher bias to project meaning into responses.
- Representation – A challenge of the research stemmed from how the researcher was able to show representation for the interview participants. As responses were analyzed and the researcher shared what the respondents had to tell us, it was important to select words that adequately shared what the participants had intended.
- Time – The researcher did not have an unlimited amount of time to spend conducting this study. In addition to the researcher, the district was anticipating results so it may incorporate the study’s findings into current and future practices.
- Verification of results – The study, as conducted, only focused on perceptions of what teachers are doing. There were no classroom observations conducted, or conversations with administrators, that may have confirmed or discredited responses made by the participants.
- Possible impacts as a result of the pandemic – The research was conducted during the third consecutive school year that had been impacted by the COVID pandemic. This could have impacted the results and participation of the study. Teacher availability and/or willingness to participate may have been limited due to a number of pandemic-related factors.
- Limited questions related to sociopolitical consciousness in student questionnaire – On the student questionnaire, there was a limited number of questions related to the

topics included in the discussion of sociopolitical consciousness. This limited the researcher's discussion about students' perceptions related to sociopolitical topics identified in the research.

Delimitations

- One school district – The school district that was selected was done so in part to almost guarantee access to teachers and students. The district had previously approached the researcher about conducting a study related to culturally relevant pedagogy. In completing the study the researcher decided to solely focus on this one district.
- Middle School and High School Teachers – The teachers selected for this study are limited to middle school and high school teachers. The researcher's teaching background is in middle school and high school so familiarity with the setting was a factor in the decision.
- Specific student group – The student responses collected during the student questionnaires are not representative of all students and/or all students of color within the school district. This group of students was selected by the school district to complete the questionnaire.
- Focus on classroom practice – The study's focus is limited to what teachers perceive they are doing in their classrooms or the skillset they bring to the classroom. At this time there was not a focus on school leaders or their role in culturally relevant practices.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology selected to explore if the middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District perceive that they are or are not incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their practices. The overview also explained that if these practices are present, how the researcher would explore which ones are being used and how teachers are using them. The chapter identified the research site as a suburban/rural school district in the southeastern United States. The data collection tools, mainly teacher questionnaire and interviews, school performance data, and student questionnaire, along with the rationale for selecting these tools were also discussed.

The chapter also included an overview of how the researcher incorporated a rating scale when discussing how teachers and students perceive the current level of culturally relevant practices in the classroom. The perceptions gathered through data collection were juxtaposed to current research and findings will be presented to CCSD.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

During this chapter, the researcher will share the findings of the study conducted in Cooper County School District. To begin, the researcher will provide a brief case study to provide context to the research. The case study will provide a look at Cooper County School District to allow the reader to better understand the district. The case study will include the five-year analysis of 11 schools within the district. The researcher will take a look at standardized test results, participation in advanced courses, and student discipline data for three of the district's high schools, the three middle schools, and five K-8 schools. The case study will also provide an overview of what CCSD has been doing in regards to equity work. This section will focus on the work that has been done at the district level, the school level, and will also discuss the formation of a district equity team.

Following the case study, the researcher will present the data findings collected during the study. This will include data from the teacher questionnaires, the teacher interviews, and the student questionnaires. As the data is presented, the researcher will discuss the connections to culturally relevant pedagogy and how it is or is not seen in the school district. Once the data has been presented and discussed, the researcher will use a rating system to compare what teachers in CCSD perceive they are doing to the research presented during the literature review.

Context of the Study

Cooper County School District (CCSD) is the pseudonym for a small, suburban/rural school district located in the southeast United States. 2019-2020 district data shows that the total

student population was 8,981 students. The school district currently has fewer than 20 schools (K-12). The make-up of schools within CCSD is 6 elementary, 5 K-8, 3 middle (with one being grades 5-8), and 5 high schools (3 traditional, one with an early college program, and one alternative). The 2018-2019 District Profile reveals an 88.5% graduation rate for all students, a statistic that exceeds the state average of 87.7%. The 2018-2019 school year reported a total of 594.45 teachers working in the entire district.

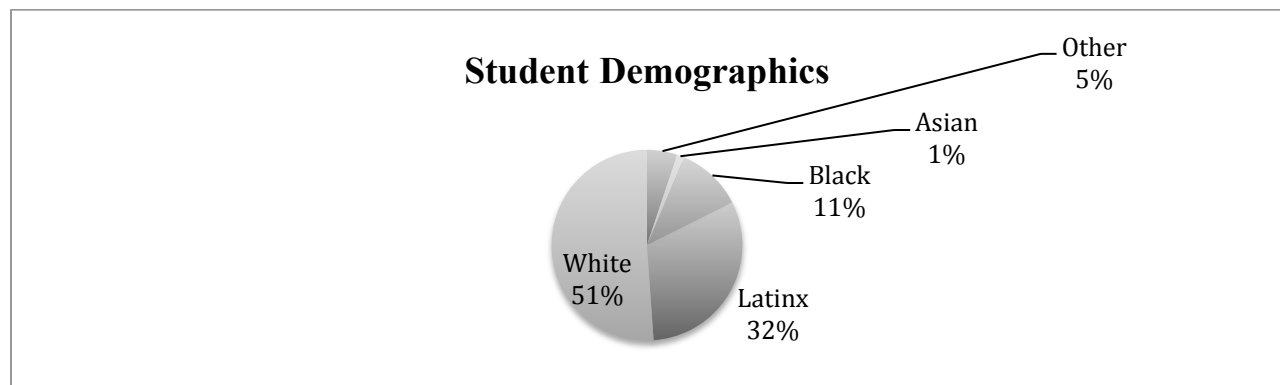
District Demographics

Student demographic data for Cooper County School District shows that greater than 50% of the student population in the district identifies as White (51%). The district data, as shown in Figure 4.1, includes Latinx students as the second most populated student group within the district. Black students, represented with 11% of the total student population, are the third highest group.

District data pertaining to teacher demographics also shows that the highest percentage of teachers identify as White (83%). Only 8% of the total teacher population within Cooper County School District identify as Black. The district data shows that 9% of teachers fall into other racial classifications not including White or Black.

Figure 4.1:

CCSD Student Demographics



Five-Year Analysis

The following section will include a five-year analysis of 11 schools within Cooper County School District. The data included will be End-of-Course test performance data, Advanced Placement course participation (for the district's high schools), and school discipline data (to include In-School Suspensions and Out-of-School Suspensions).

The state where Cooper County School District is located incorporates standardized testing to gauge students' knowledge of the concepts related to their course of study and to estimate a student's mastery of a specified content area. The state tests originally came about in response to state legislation during the mid-1980s. During the 2018-2019 school year End-of-Course tests at the high school level were administered for English II, Math I, Math III, and Biology. Elementary and middle school students are also required to take annual standardized tests. These tests are designed to measure performance and grade-level competency in the tested subjects. During the 2018-2019 school year End-of-Grade tests were given in Reading and Math for students in grades 3-8 and Science for students in grades 5 and 8.

Students taking the state-based, standardized tests are provided a score designed to measure their grade level proficiency and to determine if they have met the career and college readiness standard. Table 4.1, adopted from North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, identifies the various achievement levels currently used and indicates what this means for a student achieving this level. The current scale, shown in Table 4.1, is currently used for all End-of-Grade and End-of-Course test reporting. Earlier achievement levels also included Level 1 and Level 2. Each of these levels was considered to be not proficient and the use of these identifiers was phased out when the State Board of Education adopted new academic standards. For

Table 4.1*End-of-Grade Test Achievement Levels*

Achievement Level	Meets On-Grade-Level Proficiency Standard	Meets Career-and-College Readiness Standard
Level 5	Yes	Yes
Level 4	Yes	Yes
Level 3	Yes	No
Not Proficient (Level 1 or 2)	No	No

End-of-Grade reading tests, the new achievement levels were introduced during the 2020-2021 school year. For End-of-Grade math tests, the new achievement levels were introduced during the 2018-2019 school year. For End-of-Grade science tests, the new achievement levels were introduced during the 2019-2020 school year. All of the high school End-of-Course tests also use the new achievement levels. These were introduced by subject in the following order: Math I and Math III, 2018-2019; Biology, 2019-2020; English II, 2019-2020.

The data included in Appendix D includes the percentage of students in each subgroup who scored at or above a Level 3 on the given year’s End-of-Course or End-of-Grade test. The data includes each tested subject with each high school, each middle school, and each K-8 school in Cooper County having its own table. It should be noted that Math III did not become a tested subject until the 2018-2019 school year. Therefore, there is only one year of data for this high school course. It is also worth noting that due to limited data in the analyzed categories, the district’s early college high school and alternative school were not included in this five-year analysis.

The following sections will take a look at three of the five high schools, the three middle schools, and the five K-8 schools within Cooper County. A pseudonym was created for each of the schools included in the following analysis. An overview of school size, student

demographics, and teacher demographics will introduce the school population. This information will be followed by a short discussion about the school's testing data, the school's Advanced Placement participation data (if applicable), and the school's discipline data. Each section will not present all reported data for each school. A full breakdown of categorical data for each school is located in Appendix D. It is worth mentioning that for several of the schools discussed, in the five-year analysis as well as in Appendix D, there are instances where subgroups do not have data reported for a given category. The absence of data is not necessarily caused by a lack of students from a subgroup being enrolled in the school. Instead, for data reporting, subgroup totals falling below a pre-determined threshold are not reported by the state and/or district.

Ashley Lane High School

Ashley Lane High School is the smallest of the three primary high schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 396 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 309 students or 78.03% fall into this category. A total of 45 students (11.36%) enrolled in Ashley Lane High School identify as Hispanic, while a total of 31 students (7.83%) identify as Black. 2018-2019 data also showed that Ashley Lane High School had 32 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 28 (87.5%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of four (12.5%) were classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. In looking at the End-of-Course testing data for Ashley Lane High School (Appendix D) it can be acknowledged that the White student subgroup consistently had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years, the White student subgroup never had performance data fall below 50% of the group population scoring proficient. The

lowest percentage by the White subgroup was on the Math I exam in 2018-19 (52%). In contrast, both the Black student and Hispanic student subgroups had low scores for each test below 50% with group lows below 16% in Math I tests from 2015-16 (Hispanic) and 2016-2017 (Black).

When percentages of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for each subgroup were compared it was noticed that gaps between White students and Black students and White students and Hispanic students existed for all subjects and all years. The only exception was the 2018-2019 school year. During this school year Black students were not reported for any of the tested areas. During the same school year there was no data for Hispanic students regarding the Math I assessment.

The data in Appendix D also shows that there was no consistency when looking at which subgroup had the greater performance gap when compared to the White student subgroup. For the English I End-of-Course data the Black and Hispanic subgroups alternated years with Black students having a greater performance gap in the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 school years. The gap between White students and Hispanic students was greater for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Data for the Math I End-of-Course exam showed that for the first four years that were included (2014-2018), the Black student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students for three out of the four years (2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2017-2018). Reported data for the Biology End-of-Grade exam is the opposite of the Math I trend. For Biology, the Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students for three out of four years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017).

The data presented for Ashley Lane High School in Appendix D shows no trends for improvement over time. This can be seen when looking at each subgroup separately as well as when looking at discrepancy in performance between groups. The gaps between different groups

do not follow any particular trend. For the tested subjects with the highest performance gap during the 2014-2015 school year, the lowest gap came one to two years after and then it increased again. For some subjects, Math I for example, the highest subgroup performance and lowest performance gaps for all groups was 2014-2015. Table 4.2 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages previously discussed.

Advanced Placement Testing Data. Advanced Placement (AP) data for Ashley Lane High School (Appendix D) reveals that the White student subgroup comprised over 80% of the total AP tests taken for each of the years provided (2015-2016 through 2018-2019). The high for the White student subgroup was 88% of total tests during the 2015-2016 school year. The Black student subgroup made up less than 7% of all AP tests taken at Ashley Lane High School for each of the four years. Despite the low numbers, there was a slight increase in participation (3.57% to 5.63%) when comparing data from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. The Hispanic student subgroup recorded participation below 10% for all of the years recorded in Appendix D. The lowest participation was less than 5.5% for the subgroup. Despite showing an improvement when comparing the first year of data to the final year, the highest participation rate was in 2016-2017.

School Discipline Data. Discipline data was collected for each of the schools discussed. The researcher looked at In-School Suspension (ISS) and Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) data that was reported following calculations to create a per 1000 student value for each subgroup. All data pertaining to school discipline is located in Appendix D.

Discipline data for Ashley Lane High School showed that the Black student subgroup had the highest total number of ISS per 1000 students for three of the five years (2014-2015, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019). Based on the reported data for the 2014-2015 school year the total per

Table 4.2*Ashley Lane High School End-of-Course Test Analysis*

English									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	73.6	14-15	54	17-18	--	--	--	--	--
Black	54	15-16	42.9	16-17	27.4	14-15	3.2	15-16	
Hispanic	58.3	16-17	43	17-18	16.5	14-15	1.7	16-17	
Math I									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	63	14-15	52	18-19	--	--	--	--	--
Black	46.2	14-15	14.3	16-17	42	16-17	16.8	14-15	
Hispanic	57.1	14-15	15.4	15-16	39.6	15-16	5.9	14-15	
Biology									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	73.1	16-17	55	18-19	--	--	--	--	--
Black	50	14-15 & 15-16	40	16-17 & 17-18	33.1	16-17	8.9	15-16	
Hispanic	45.5	15-16	16.7	14-15	50.3	14-15	13.4	15-16	

1000 students calculation showed that the total for the Black student subgroup was 158% of the White student subgroup for the same year and category. The ISS total for the Black subgroup in comparison to the White student subgroup had decreased slightly by 2018-2019 with the total number being only 153% of the White subgroup.

The Black student subgroup also had the highest numbers in regards to OSS for four out of the five years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018) at Ashley Lane High School. During the 2014-2015 school year the Black subgroup quantities were 536% of the White subgroup. By the 2018-2019 school year the number of the Black subgroup receiving OSS was only 146% of the White student subgroup. The Hispanic student subgroup had the largest

OSS quantity for the 2018-2019 school year. Appendix D reflects that this total was 196% of the White student subgroup.

Burton High School

Burton High School is the second largest of the three primary high schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 851 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as Hispanic. A total of 530 students or 62.28% fall into this category. A total of 195 students (22.91%) enrolled in Burton High School identify as White, while a total of 98 students (11.52%) identify as Black. School data also included six (0.71%) students who identify as Asian. 2018-2019 data also showed that Burton High School had 70 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 59 (84.3%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of nine (12.9%) were classified as beginning teachers. The school also employed two teachers (2.9%) who were considered to be provisionally licensed teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The End-of-Course testing data for Burton High School (Appendix D) shows that performance for the White student subgroup was always the highest among the groups reported. The White student subgroup was reported to be at proficiency (Level 3) or above proficiency (Level 4 or 5) at a rate of 50% or higher for each subject and all of the years collected. The only exception to this was seen with the Math I test during the 2018-2019 year. During this year the White student subgroup was only at 27%. The 2018-2019 school year was also the school year with the smallest performance gaps between both White students and Black students and White students and Hispanic students. While the gaps in performance for the year narrowed, performance decreased for each of the three groups.

While performance for the White student subgroup remained above 50% for the majority of subjects, performance highs for the Black student and Hispanic student subgroups met 50% only one time for each group. Both instances came in data reported for the English I End-of-Course test with Black students scoring at 50% in 2016-2017 and Hispanic students scoring at 50% in 2018-2019. Despite a higher reported percentage for each year mentioned, the gap in proficiency percentages when compared to the White student subgroup remained over 20.

The data in Appendix D shows that there was no consistency when looking at which subgroup had the greater performance gap when compared to the White student subgroup. For the English I End-of-Course data the Black and Hispanic subgroups alternated years with Hispanic students having a greater performance gap in the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 school years. The gap between White students and Black students was greater for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. Data for the Math I End-of-Course exam showed that for the first four years that were included (2014-2018), the Black student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students. The Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students during the 2018-2019 year. Reported data for the Biology End-of-Course exam shows the Black student subgroup having a greater performance gap compared to White students during the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. The Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap during the 2016-2017 school year.

The data reported in Appendix D does not show any consistent five-year improvements for any of the subgroups. Improvements shown could be considered mostly sporadic. The Hispanic subgroup did show a three-year growth trend in the English I End-of-Course test. The subgroup's proficiency was reported at 37.1% for the 2016-2017 school year and increased to

38.0% for 2017-2018 year and increased again to 50% in 2018-2019. Table 4.3 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages previously discussed.

Advanced Placement Testing Data. Advanced Placement (AP) data for Burton High School (Appendix D) identifies that the Hispanic student subgroup had the highest participation over the four years reported. This statistic is consistent with the Hispanic subgroup having the largest population in the school. The Hispanic student subgroup comprised over 47% of the total AP tests taken for each of the years provided. For three of the four years reported the participation was above 55%. The White student subgroup made up over 30% of Burton High School’s test takers for each of the four years. While still below the reported percentage for the

Table 4.3

Burton High School End-of-Course Test Analysis

English									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	74	18-19	66	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Black	50	16-17	24.2	15-16	41.8	15-16	21.7	16-17	16-17
Hispanic	50	18-19	37.1	16-17	34.6	16-17	18.1	15-16	15-16
Math I									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	79.2	15-16	27	18-19	--	--	--	--	--
Black	33.3	15-16	9.1	14-15	57.6	14-15	5	18-19	18-19
Hispanic	46.9	15-16	19	18-19	39	16-17	8	18-19	18-19
Biology									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	71	17-18	54.2	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Black	34.6	16-17	10	17-18	61	17-18	19.7	14-15	14-15
Hispanic	46.6	14-15	27	17-18	44	17-18	7.6	16-17	16-17

Hispanic subgroup, the school's White student population is only 22%. The Black student subgroup made up less than 5% of all AP tests taken at Burton High School for the final two years. The highest percentage for the subgroup was 9.82%, which was still below the school's population percentage for Black students.

School Discipline Data. The discipline data for Burton High School (Appendix D) shows that the Black student subgroup had the highest number of ISS infractions for all five of the years reported. In the 2014-2015 school year the total for the Black student subgroup was 278% of White student subgroup. This percentage had increased to 315% by the 2018-2019 school year.

Based on the discipline data in Appendix D, the Black student subgroup also had the highest number of OSS occurrences for all five of the years reported. In the first year of data collected, 2014-2015, the Black student subgroup had a total that was 178% of the White student subgroup. Data for the 2018-2019 shows that the Black subgroup total had increased to 722% of the White subgroup.

The Hispanic student subgroup recorded the second highest totals for ISS for all five years included in this study. The Hispanic student subgroup had the lowest totals of OSS for the 2017-2018 school year.

Knight High School

Knight High School is the largest of the three primary high schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 1,455 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 916 students or 62.96% fall into this category. A total of 265 students (18.21%) enrolled in Knight High School identify as Hispanic, while a total of 161 students (11.07%) identify as Black. School data also included

26 (1.79%) students who identify as Asian. 2018-2019 data also showed that Knight High School had 93 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 83 (89.2%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of 10 (10.8%) were classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The End-of-Course test data reported in Appendix D identifies that the White student subgroup maintained a percentage of students scoring at (Level 3) or above proficiency (Level 4 or 5) of 50% or higher for every subject and every year reported. The White student subgroup scored at or above proficiency at a rate of 70% 13 different times over all years and subjects. The subgroup also scored over 80% proficient two times with both instances being on the Biology exam (2014-2015 and 2016-2017). Performance for the Black student subgroup was under 44% for every subject and every year collected. The Hispanic student subgroup did achieve percentages over 50% two times (English 2016-2017 and Biology 2014-2015). Table 4.4 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages discussed.

The data in Appendix D shows that the Hispanic subgroup had the greater performance gap more frequently when compared to the White student subgroup than the Black student subgroup did. For the English I End-of-Course data the Hispanic student subgroup had the greater performance gap in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. The Black student subgroup then had the greater performance gap for the remaining three years (2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019). Data for the Math I End-of-Course exam showed that the Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students during the 2014-2015, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years. The Black student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students during the 2015-2016 year. The performance gap for both groups compared to the White student subgroup for the 2018-2019 school year was

Table 4.4*Knight High School End-of-Course Test Analysis*

English									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	79	18-19	73	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Black	44	17-18	32.7	16-17	45.7	16-17	34	17-18	
Hispanic	51.8	16-17	34.2	15-16	38.8	15-16	26.6	16-17	
Math I									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	77	17-18	50	18-19	--	--	--	--	--
Black	45	17-18	17	18-19	37.4	15-16	31.3	14-15	
Hispanic	38	17-18	17	18-19	41.4	14-15	33	18-19	
Biology									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	84	18-19	68.3	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Black	40.8	14-15	18.2	16-17	52.8	16-17	33.7	15-16	
Hispanic	50	14-15	26.2	15-16	47	18-19	30	16-17	

equal. Reported data for the Biology End-of-Grade exam shows the Black student subgroup having a greater performance gap compared to White students during the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 school years. The Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap during the 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 school years. The performance gap for both groups was equal for the 2017-2018 school year.

Advanced Placement Testing Data. Advanced Placement (AP) data for Knight High School (Appendix D) shows that the White student subgroup comprised over 80% of the total AP tests taken for each of the years provided. In comparison, the percentage of White students in the total student body is around 63%. The Black student subgroup recorded a high of 6.55% of tests taken and a low of 4.86% of tests taken. For three out of the four years provided the Black student subgroup made up less than 5.5% of all AP tests taken at Burton High School. The

Hispanic student subgroup recorded participation below 8% for all of the years recorded in Appendix D. Three of the years included participation under 6.5% despite the Hispanic student population being above 18% of the school's total population.

School Discipline Data. Discipline data for Knight High School for all years of this study may be found in Appendix D. According to the data, the Black student subgroup had the highest number of ISS incidents per 1000 students for all five of the reported years. For year one (2014-2015) of the reported data the ISS totals for the Black student subgroup at Knight High School were 324% of the White student subgroup. By year five (2018-2019), this percentage increased to 389% of the White student subgroup.

In looking at the OSS data for Knight High School, it can be acknowledged that the Black student subgroup had the highest number of OSS incidents for four out of the five years (2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019). In 2014-2015 the Hispanic subgroup had the highest total with the Black subgroup second. Similar to the ISS data for Knight High School, the gap between the Black student subgroup totals and the White student subgroup totals widened over the five years of reported data. Data for the 2014-2015 school year shows that the Black subgroup was 284% of the White subgroup. By 2018-2019 the number had increased to 430%.

Davis Middle School

Davis Middle School is the second largest of the three middle schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 601 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as Hispanic. A total of 432 students or 72% fall into this category. A total of 84 students (14%) enrolled in Davis Middle School identify as Black, while a total of 71 students (12%) identify as White. 2018-2019 data showed that Davis

Middle School had 50 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 35 (70%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of 14 (28%) were classified as beginning teachers. One teacher (2%) was identified as having a provisional teaching license.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. In looking at the End-of-Grade testing data for Davis Middle School (Appendix D) it can be acknowledged that the White student subgroup consistently had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years, the White student subgroup performance fell below 50% only one time (2014-2015, Math, 40%). The data in Appendix D also shows that the Black student subgroup never attained a percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) of 50% or above. The closest for the Black student subgroup was 46% for the science End-of-Grade test in 2018-2019. The 2018-2019 science End-of-Grade test also yielded the highest results for the Hispanic student subgroup with 63% of the students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5).

Appendix D also shows that at Davis Middle School the Black student subgroup had the highest gap in performance when compared to the White student group for each subject and every year of data. Table 4.5 highlights that in addition to consistently having a higher gap in performance, the Black student subgroup also had the largest high gap between groups while the Hispanic student subgroup had the smallest “low” gap.

During the five-year period improvement did occur for each of the subgroups. However, the improvement seen in Appendix D was not always continuous from year to year. So, even though year five was higher than year one, the improvement did not gradually increase throughout the five-year period.

Table 4.5*Davis Middle School End-of-Grade Test Analysis*

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	68	17-18 & 18-19	60	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	71	14-15	N/A	N/A					
Black	34	18-19	26	15-16	37	17-18	31	16-17	
Hispanic	49	16-17	38	14-15 & 15-16	23	15-16 & 18-19	15	16-17	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	58	18-19	40	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	71	14-15	N/A	N/A					
Black	20	17-18	12	14-15	41	18-19	28	14-15	
Hispanic	43	16-17	26	14-15	24	15-16	9	16-17	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	77	16-17	57	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	46	18-19	21	17-18	47	17-18	26	18-19	
Hispanic	63	18-19	36	15-16	21	15-16	9	18-19	

School Discipline Data. Data related to school discipline for Davis Middle School can be found in Appendix D. The data shows that the Black student subgroup had the highest number of ISS incidents for all five of the years included. In the 2014-2015 school year, the ISS totals for the Black subgroup were 127% of the White student subgroup and 327% of the Hispanic student subgroup. Data for the 2018-2019 school year shows that totals for the Black subgroup were 336% of White student subgroup and 386% Hispanic subgroup. The Hispanic student subgroup had the lowest ISS totals for three out of the five years.

Similar to ISS, the Black student subgroup at Davis Middle School had the highest number of OSS incidents for all five of the years studied. In 2014-2015 the Black student subgroup had totals that were 202% that of the White student subgroup and 1343% the totals for the Hispanic group. By the 2018-2019 school year, the Black subgroup was 266% of the White subgroup and 376% of the Hispanic subgroup. The Hispanic student subgroup had the lowest OSS totals for all five years.

Palt Middle School

Palt Middle School is the smallest of the three middle schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 468 students in grades 5-8. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 249 students or 53% fall into this category. A total of 102 students (22%) enrolled in Palt Middle School identify as Black, while a total of 77 students (16%) identify as Hispanic. School data also included seven (1.5%) students who identify as Asian. 2018-2019 data also showed that Palt Middle School had 32 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 27 (84.4%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of five (15.65%) were classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The End-of-Grade testing data for Palt Middle School (Appendix D) identifies that the White student subgroup consistently had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years, the White student subgroup performance remained above 50%. For four out of the five years, on the science End-of-Grade test, the percentage was above 80% with a high in 2016-2017 of 93%. While the 2016-2017 science test yielded the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for the White student subgroup the data shows that this year had the highest performance gaps for both the Black

student subgroup compared to the White subgroup and the Hispanic student subgroup compared to the White subgroup.

Table 4.6 shows that at Palt Middle School the Hispanic student subgroup achieved high performance percentages above 50% for each subject. The high performance percentage for the Black student subgroup was only above 50% one time (2017-2018, Science).

Appendix D shows that at Palt Middle School the Black student subgroup had the highest gap in performance when compared to the White student group for reading and math. On the science End-of-Grade test, the Hispanic student subgroup had a greater gap for the 2014-2015 school year and then over the remaining four years the Black student subgroup had the higher gap.

When considering improvements in performance, Appendix D shows that improvements did occur over the five-year period for both the reading and math End-of-Grade test. The data for the science test identifies that improvement over five years did occur for the White student and Hispanic student subgroups, however not for the Black student subgroup.

School Discipline Data. Appendix D includes the discipline data for Palt Middle School. The included data shows that the Black student subgroup had highest number of ISS per 1000 students for five of the five years. In 2014-2015, the ISS totals for the Black subgroup were 564% of White student subgroup. By the 2018-2019 school year, the totals for the Black subgroup were only 227.09% of White student subgroup. The Hispanic student subgroup had the lowest ISS totals for the 2017-2018 school year.

The Black student subgroup at Palt Middle School also had the highest total number of OSS occurrences for all five of the years reported. 2014-2015 data (Appendix D) shows that the

Table 4.6*Palt Middle School End-of-Grade Test Analysis*

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	
White	78	18-19	67	14-15	--	--	--	--	
Asian	80	15-16	70	14-15					
Black	44	16-17 & 17-18	31	14-15	45	18-19	31	17-18	
Hispanic	63	18-19	38	15-16	33	15-16	15	18-19	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	
White	74	18-19	50	14-15	--	--	--	--	
Asian	60	15-16	60	14-15					
Black	33	18-19	14	17-18	51	17-18	30	14-15	
Hispanic	53	18-19	32	15-16	30	16-17	15	14-15	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	
White	93	16-17	75	14-15	--	--	--	--	
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	53	17-18	39	18-19	47	16-17	30	17-18	
Hispanic	68	18-19	38	14-15	42	16-17	17	18-19	

OSS totals for the Black subgroup was 772% of White student subgroup. Data for the 2018-2019 school year shows that the Black subgroup was 297.63% of White subgroup and 552.26% of the Hispanic subgroup. The Hispanic student subgroup had the lowest OSS totals in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

Sylvester Middle School

Sylvester Middle School is the largest of the three middle schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 683 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 450 students or 66% fall into this category. A total of 128 students (19%) enrolled in Sylvester Middle School identify as

Hispanic, while a total of 39 students (6%) identify as Black. School data also included seven (1%) students who identify as Asian. 2018-2019 data also showed that Sylvester Middle School had 49 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 40 (81.6%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of nine (18.4%) were classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The End-of-Grade testing data for Sylvester Middle School (Appendix D) shows that performance for the White student subgroup was always the highest among the groups reported. The White student subgroup was reported to be at proficiency (Level 3) or above proficiency (Level 4 or 5) at a rate of 78% or higher for each subject and all of the years collected. The White student subgroup scored at proficient (Level 3) or above (Level 4 or 5) at a rate of over 85% seven times during the five-year period. The White student subgroup scored over 90% three times on the science End-of-Grade test (2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019) with a high of 95% being reported.

Sylvester Middle School reported data for the Asian student subgroup for reading and math for all five years. The Asian student subgroup scored over 60% proficient (Level 3 or higher) in all subjects over the five-year period. The subgroup scored over 80% six times. The performance percentages of the Asian student subgroup were higher than the Black and Hispanic student subgroups in all subjects for all years.

Appendix D shows that gaps in performance existed for each of the five years and in all subject areas. For the reading End-of-Grade data the Hispanic subgroup had a greater performance gap for the first four years (2014-2018) and the Black subgroup had a greater performance gap in 2018-2019. Data for the math End-of-Grade tests showed that for the first two years that were included (2014-2016), the Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students. The Black student subgroup had the greater

performance gap for the remaining three years (2016-2019). Reported data for the science End-of-Grade test shows that the Hispanic student subgroup had a greater performance gap compared to White students for the first three years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017). The Black student subgroup had a greater gap in performance over the remaining two years. Table 4.7 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages discussed.

School Discipline Data. Five-year discipline data can be found for Sylvester Middle School in Appendix D. The data shows that the Black student subgroup had the highest number of ISS per 1000 students for two of the five years (17-18, 18-19). The Hispanic student subgroup had the highest ISS totals for the first three years of collected data. During the 2014-2015 school year the Black student subgroup was 327.13% of the White student subgroup. By 2018-2019 the percentage had increased to 384.61% of the White student subgroup.

The discipline data for Sylvester Middle School identifies that the Black student subgroup had the highest total number of OSS incidents for four out of the five years (2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019). Appendix D shows that during the 2014-2015 school year, the total number of OSS incidents for the Black subgroup was 184.74% of the White student subgroup. By 2018-2019 the number of OSS incidents for the Black subgroup had increased to 524.59% of the White subgroup.

Castleton School

Castleton School is the smallest of the five K-8 schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 176 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 162 students or 92% fall into this category. A total of eight students (5%) enrolled in Castleton School identify as Hispanic, while

Table 4.7*Sylvester Middle School End-of-Grade Test Analysis*

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	85	15-16 & 17-18	81	16-17	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	89	17-18	60	14-15					
Black	50	18-19	40	16-17	41	16-17	32	18-19	
Hispanic	52	18-19	34	14-15, 15-16 & 16-17	51	15-16	30	18-19	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	81	15-16 & 17-18	78	14-15 & 18-19	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	83	17-18 & 18-19	73	15-16					
Black	43	14-15	24	17-18	57	17-18	35	14-15	
Hispanic	43	17-18 & 18-19	29	15-16	52	15-16	35	18-19	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	95	17-18	85	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	90	18-19	N/A	N/A					
Black	64	16-17	44	18-19	50	18-19	29	16-17	
Hispanic	64	18-19	36	14-15	50	14-15	30	18-19	

a total of two students (1%) identify as Black. 2018-2019 data also showed that Castleton School had 22 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 20 (90.9%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of two (9.1%) were classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. In looking at the End-of-Grade testing data for Castleton School (Appendix D) it can be acknowledged that for most subjects and most years the White student subgroup had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). The data presented from the 2018-2019 math EOG show that the Hispanic subgroup slightly outperformed the White subgroup. Castleton School did not have any data for the Black student subgroup for any of the years included in this study. For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years, the White student subgroup never had performance data fall below 50% of the group population scoring proficient. The Hispanic subgroup scored above 50% one year (2018-2019) in reading and three years (2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019) in math. There were no scores reported for the Hispanic subgroup on the science EOG.

When percentages of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for each subgroup were compared it was noticed that gaps between White students and Hispanic students existed in the reading EOG data for four years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2018-2019). The only exception was the 2017-2018 school year. During this school year Hispanic students did not have any data present for the reading EOG. Gaps in reported data for the math EOG followed the same pattern except during the 2018-2019 school year the Hispanic subgroup outperformed the White subgroup.

The data presented for Castleton School in Appendix D shows signs of improvement over time for both subgroups. After having their lowest percentage of students achieving proficiency on the reading EOG in the 2014-2015 school year, the Hispanic subgroup showed gradual improvement and recorded their highest percent proficient in the 2018-2019 school year. The White subgroup declined slightly on the reading EOG after the 2014-2015 school year and then showed gradual improvement until 2018-2019. The Hispanic subgroup also showed

improvements when comparing year one to year five. The increase in percent proficient was not as gradual as the reading EOG, however, improvement did occur. For the White subgroup, improvement occurred over the first four years and then there was a slight decrease in 2018-2019. Table 4.8 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages discussed.

School Discipline Data. The discipline data for Castleton School is located in Appendix D. The data provided for the school includes limited subgroup data. The Black student subgroup only has data for two years within the five year’s covered in the study. Each time the Black subgroup is included it is the highest in each category. Specific values and how they compare to the other subgroups may be found in Appendix D.

Table 4.8

Castleton School End-of-Grade Test Analysis

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	
White	78	18-19	68.2	15-16	--	--	--	--	
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Black	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Hispanic	70	18-19	37.5	14-15	32.4	14-15	8	18-19	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	
White	71	17-18	54.4	14-15	--	--	--	--	
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Black	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Hispanic	70	18-19	41.7	15-16	15.7	15-16	-3.0	18-19	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	
White	86	17-18	72	15-16	--	--	--	--	
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Black	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Hispanic	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	

Sunderland School

Sunderland School is the second largest of the five K-8 schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 313 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 209 students or 67% fall into this category. A total of 56 students (18%) enrolled in Sunderland School identify as Hispanic, while a total of 34 students (11%) identify as Black. 2018-2019 data also showed that Sunderland School had 29 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 28 (96.6%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of one (3.5%) was classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The data presented in Appendix D for Sunderland School shows that for most subjects and most years the White student subgroup had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). The White subgroup consistently had a higher percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency than the Black subgroup. In reading and math the White subgroup outperformed the Hispanic subgroup for all years. On the science EOG the Hispanic subgroup recorded a higher percent of students at or above proficient than the White subgroup during the 2015-2016 and 2015-2016 school years. For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years, the White student subgroup never had performance data fall below 50% of the group population scoring proficient. The Hispanic subgroup scored above 50% 10 times, including all subjects in 2017-2018. The Black subgroup scored at 50% one time (18-19 math).

When percentages of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for each subgroup were compared it was noticed that gaps between White students and Black students existed for all subjects and all years. Gaps between White students and Hispanic

students existed in the reading and math EOG data for all years and existed in the science EOG data for three years. The only exceptions were the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years.

During these school years the Hispanic subgroup had higher percentages of students scoring at or above proficient.

The data presented for Sunderland School in Appendix D shows signs of improvement over time for all three subgroups. The increase in percent proficient for each subgroup was not gradual from year to year, however, improvement did occur. For each group the percentages of students at or above proficient increased from year one to year five. Table 4.8 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the percentages discussed.

Table 4.9

Sunderland School End-of-Grade Test Analysis

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	65	18-19	60.5	16-17	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	44	17-18 & 18-19	21.1	15-16	41.3	15-16	20	17-18	
Hispanic	58	17-18	38.5	15-16	23.9	15-16	6	17-18	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	69	18-19	57.6	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	50	18-19	35	14-15	24.5	14-15	15.5	15-16	
Hispanic	57	18-19	45.9	14-15	13.6	14-15	1.2	15-16	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	88	18-19	69.6	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	44	14-15	--	--	25.6	14-15	--	--	
Hispanic	81.3	16-17	25	14-15	44.6	14-15	-2.5	16-17	

School Discipline Data. Discipline data for Sunderland School was collected for the five years analyzed in this study. The data for each subgroup and each given year may be found in Appendix D. The data for Sunderland School shows that the Black student subgroup had highest number of ISS per 1000 students for four of the five years (14-15, 15-16, 16-17, 17-18). Data from year one (2014-2015) of the five-year span identifies that ISS totals for the Black subgroup were 179% of the White student subgroup and 181% of the Hispanic student subgroup. Data from the final year (2018-2019) of the five-year span shows that the ISS totals for the Black subgroup was 183% of White student subgroup. Data for Sunderland School also shows that the Hispanic subgroup had the highest totals for ISS during the 2018-2019 school year.

Similar to the ISS totals, the Black student subgroup had highest number of OSS incidents per 1000 students for four out of the five years (14-15, 15-16, 16-17, 18-19). During the 2014-2015 school year, the OSS totals for the Black subgroup were 119% of the White student subgroup and 218% the totals of the Hispanic subgroup. The gap between the groups had widened by 2018-2019 where the OSS totals for the Black subgroup were 306% of the White subgroup totals and 817% of the Hispanic subgroup. Despite these large numbers, the Black subgroup had the lowest reported OSS totals for the 2017-2018 school year and the Hispanic subgroup had the highest totals for the same year.

Middleborough School

Middleborough School is the second smallest of the five K-8 schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 244 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 162 students or 66% fall into this category. A total of 36 students (15%) enrolled in Middleborough School identify as Hispanic, while a total of 30 students (12%) identify as Black. School data also included three

(1.2%) students who identify as Asian. 2018-2019 data also showed that Middleborough School had 25 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 22 (88%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of two (8%) were classified as beginning teachers. The school also employed one (4%) teacher who was provisionally licensed.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. In looking at the End-of-Grade testing for Middleborough School (Appendix D) one can see that for all five years on the reading and math EOG the White student subgroup had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). Gaps between the subgroups were also present for the first two years of science with the White student subgroup having a higher percentage at or above proficiency. For the last three years of the study there was no science EOG data for either the Black subgroup or Hispanic subgroup. For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years the White student subgroup performed above 60% proficiency. This included scoring above 80% for all five years on the science EOG. Data for Middleborough School identifies that the Black subgroup performed above 50% four times. Two of these instances were in math (2017-2018, 2018-2019) and two were in science (2014-2015, 2015-2016). The data in Appendix D shows that the Hispanic subgroup scored above 50% four times. One of these times was in reading (2015-2016) and the other three were all in math (2014-2015, 2016-2017, and 2018-2019).

When percentages of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for each subgroup were compared it was noticed that gaps between White students and Black students and White students and Hispanic students existed for all subjects and all years. The data shows that on the reading EOG the Black student subgroup had the greater gaps during the first two years (2014-2015, 2015-2016) and the Hispanic student subgroup had the greater gaps over the final three years of the study (2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019). The data for the math

EOG identifies that the Black subgroup had greater gaps in each of the first three years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017). The Hispanic subgroup had a greater gap in the percent of students at or above proficiency during the 2017-2018 school year and both the Black and Hispanic subgroups had identical gaps during the final year (2018-2019). Appendix D shows that gaps were also present on the science EOG. As was previously mentioned, there were only scores for the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup for the first two years of the study. During this time, the Black student subgroup had the greater gaps when compared to the White student subgroup.

The data presented for Middleborough School in Appendix D shows some signs of improvement over time for all three subgroups on the reading EOG. The White subgroup and Black subgroup showed improvement over time on the math EOG, however, the Hispanic subgroup showed a decrease in performance percentage. Table 4.10 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages discussed.

School Discipline Data. Discipline data was collected for Middleborough School and is located in Appendix D. The data that was collected shows that the Black student subgroup had the highest totals of ISS incidents for four years. There was no Black subgroup or Hispanic subgroup ISS data for the 2018-2019 school year. In looking at the reported numbers, for the 2014-2015 school year the ISS totals for the Black subgroup were 383% of those of the White student subgroup. Middleborough School discipline data for 2017-2018 shows that the Black subgroup was only 117% of White student subgroup for the final year of the collected data.

OSS data was collected for all five years of the study. The data shows that the Black student subgroup had highest number of OSS occurrences for all five years. During the 2014-2015 school year the OSS totals for the Black subgroup at Middleborough School were 440% of

Table 4.10*Middleborough School End-of-Grade Test Analysis*

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	69	17-18	64	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	44	17-18	37.1	15-16	30	15-16	20.8	14-15	
Hispanic	53.8	15-16	18	17-18	51	17-18	13.3	15-16	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	75	18-19	60.7	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	59	17-18	28.2	15-16	38.5	15-16	15	17-18	
Hispanic	57	18-19	46.2	15-16	27	17-18	5.1	14-15	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	89	17-18	81.1	16-17	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	61.5	15-16	57.1	14-15	30.4	14-15	23.1	15-16	
Hispanic	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

the White student subgroup. The data collected for the 2018-2019 year shows that the Black subgroup totals were 532% of the White subgroup.

Ranger Locks School

Ranger Locks School is the third largest of the five K-8 schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 273 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 168 students or 62% fall into this category. A total of 51 students (19%) enrolled in Ranger Locks School identify as Hispanic, while a total of 42 students (15%) identify as Black. 2018-2019 data also showed that Ranger Locks School had 27 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 23 (85.2%) teachers

were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of three (11.1%) were classified as beginning teachers. The school also employed one (3.7%) teacher who was provisionally licensed.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The data presented in Appendix D for Ranger Locks School shows that for most subjects and most years the White student subgroup had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). The White subgroup consistently had a higher percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency than the Black subgroup. In reading and math the White subgroup outperformed the Hispanic subgroup for all years. On the science EOG the Hispanic subgroup recorded a higher percent of students at or above proficient than the White subgroup during the 2014-2015 school year. For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years, the White student subgroup never had performance data fall below 55% of the group population scoring proficient. This includes a high of 89% students at or above proficient on the 2017-2018 science EOG. During this same time, the Black subgroup scored at 50% one time (2018-2019, math) and the Hispanic student subgroup scored 50% of students at or above proficient seven times. During the 2014-2015 school year the Hispanic subgroup was above 50% in all three EOG categories.

When percentages of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for each subgroup were compared it was noticed that gaps between White students and Black students existed for reading and math for all years. In science, the Black subgroup only had data for two years (2014-2015, 2016-2017). For each of these two years there was a gap between the White subgroup and Black subgroup. Gaps between White students and Hispanic students existed in the reading and math EOG data for all years and existed in the science EOG data for three years. The only exceptions were the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 school years. During the 2014-2015 year the Hispanic subgroup had higher percentages of students scoring at or above

proficient. During the 2016-2017 school year there was no science data presented for the Hispanic subgroup.

The data presented for Ranger Locks School in Appendix D does not show signs of improvement over time for all three subgroups in all tested subjects. On the math EOG the White subgroup and the Black subgroup increased percentages from year one to year five, but the Hispanic subgroup decreased over the same timeframe. Table 4.11 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages discussed.

Table 4.11

Ranger Locks School End-of-Grade Test Analysis

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	76	17-18	70.6	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	23.8	15-16	19	18-19	55	14-15 & 18-19	46.8	15-16	
Hispanic	50	14-15	33.3	15-16 & 16-17	42.1	16-17	37.3	15-16	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	70	18-19	56.3	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	50	18-19	11.5	14-15	49.1	14-15	20	18-19	
Hispanic	57.7	14-15	30	17-18	36	17-18	2.9	14-15	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	89	17-18	70.2	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	41.7	16-17	16.7	14-15	57.8	14-15	45.8	16-17	
Hispanic	75	14-15	43	18-19	39	18-19	-0.5	14-15	

School Discipline Data. The discipline data for Ranger Locks School is located in Appendix D. Similar to Castleton School, the data provided for the school includes limited subgroup data. The data does show that when the Black student subgroup was present their totals remained the highest. The only time this did not occur was for the OSS totals reported during the 2014-2015 school year. Specific values and how they compare to the other subgroups may be found in Appendix D.

Vincent School

Vincent School is the largest of the five K-8 schools in Cooper County School District. 2018-2019 data showed the school had a total population of 341 students. The largest subgroup of students in the school identify as White. A total of 251 students or 74% fall into this category. A total of 55 students (16%) enrolled in Vincent School identify as Hispanic, while a total of 11 students (3%) identify as Black. School data also included five (1.5%) students who identify as Asian. 2018-2019 data also showed that Vincent School had 30 full-time teachers. During the identified school year, 28 (93.3%) teachers were considered to be experienced teachers. A total of two (6.7%) were classified as beginning teachers.

End-of-Course Testing Data Trends. The End-of-Grade testing for Vincent School (Appendix D) has limited subgroup data for the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup in several categories. The data shows that for four years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019) on the reading EOG the White student subgroup had the highest percentage of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5). The White subgroup also had the highest percentage of students at or above proficient for the math EOG for four of the five years. The Black subgroup had a higher percentage at or above proficient than the White subgroup in 2016-2017. For all three tested subjects and for each of the five years the White student subgroup

performed above 65% proficiency. This included scoring 85% for the science EOG in 2018-2019. Data for Vincent School identifies that the Black subgroup performed above 50% seven times. The highest of these seven was 80% on the math EOG in 2016-2017. The data included in Appendix D shows that the Hispanic subgroup scored above 50% three times. Two of these were in science (2015-2016, 2018-2019) and one was in math (2018-2019).

When percentages of students scoring proficient (Level 3) or higher (Level 4 or 5) for each subgroup were compared it was noticed that gaps between White students and Hispanic students existed for reading and math for all years. The data also shows that gaps were present for four out of five years for science. There was not data reported for the Hispanic subgroup in science during the 2016-2017 school year. The data for Vincent School also shows that gaps between the White subgroup and the Black subgroup existed for three years in reading (2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2017-2018) and three years in math (2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2017-2018). Data for the Black subgroup was only reported for one year for the science EOG. Table 4.12 includes a breakdown of each tested subject by subgroup along with the performance percentages discussed.

The data presented for Vincent School in Appendix D shows some signs of improvement over time for all three subgroups on the reading and math EOG. The White subgroup and Hispanic subgroup showed improvement over time on the science EOG, however, the Black subgroup only had one year of reported data. The improvement is not gradual over time. When comparing year one to year five there is an improvement, however, the improvement does not occur in each consecutive year.

School Discipline Data. Discipline data was collected for Vincent School for each of the years included in this study. The ISS and OSS totals for each subgroup and each year may be

Table 4.12*Vincent School End-of-Grade Test Analysis*

Reading									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	74.5	14-15	69	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	73.3	16-17	46.7	15-16	24.5	14-15	-1.7	16-17	
Hispanic	44.4	16-17	20	18-19	53	18-19	27.2	16-17	
Math									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	78	17-18 & 18-19	65.5	15-16	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	80	16-17	53.3	15-16	16.5	14-15	-9.3	16-17	
Hispanic	53	18-19	37.1	15-16	32	17-18	25	18-19	
Science									
Subgroup	High %	Year	Low %	Year	High Gap	Year	Low Gap	Year	Year
White	85	18-19	78.6	14-15	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--					
Black	42.9	14-15	--	--	35.7	14-15	--	--	--
Hispanic	58.3	15-16	18.8	14-15	59.8	14-15	25.5	15-16	

found in Appendix D. In looking at the data one can recognize that the Black student subgroup had the highest number of ISS incidents for two of the five years (2014-2015 and 2018-2019). The Hispanic student subgroup had the highest number of ISS incidents for the remaining three years (2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018). The data shows that in year one (2014-2015), the total number of ISS incidents for the Black subgroup was 333% of the White student subgroup. Year five (2018-2019) data indicates that the ISS totals for the Black subgroup were 487% of the White student subgroup.

The OSS data for the five years shows that the Black student subgroup had the highest number of OSS incidents for two out of the five years (2015-2016, 2016-2017). The Hispanic

student subgroup had the highest OSS totals for the remaining three years. Vincent School discipline data for 2014-2015 identifies that the OSS totals for the Hispanic subgroup were 123% of White student subgroup. Discipline data for the 2018-2019 school year indicates that the OSS totals for the Hispanic subgroup had increased to 150% of the White subgroup.

District Level Equity Focus

In recent years, Cooper County School District has recognized a commitment to equity work at the district and school level. A number of factors, including the need to provide a better school experience for the district's diverse community, ultimately led to this new focus. The district recognized that achievement gaps between subgroup academic performances were prevalent as well as disproportionality when it came to discipline data. Acknowledging that research shows that a focus on equity may lead to increased achievement increases for all students, CCSD shifted equity to a focal point of the district. This commitment would eventually lead to the 2016 founding of the district's equity team (to be discussed below).

As CCSD continues to move forward with their equity work, they have made staffing changes to help facilitate this district focus. In 2021 the district added an Executive Director for Excellence and Opportunity. According to CCSD, the Executive Director for Excellence and Opportunity will work to support principals in their equity work. In addition to this role, the new Executive Director will also be responsible for:

- Community Engagement
- Provide support for culturally relevant curriculum
- Develop supports for students (affinity groups, LGBTQ+ support, focus groups, recognitions, etc.)

- Review policies and assist with strategic planning (code of conduct, Board of Education policies, etc.)
- Meet and work with district equity team
- Support school equity teams
- Support AVID across the district
- Support of Dual Language across K-12 in collaboration with level directors
- Scheduling and promoting events related to equity (Twitter chats, book club opportunities, local cultural events, parent nights, monthly themes like Hispanic Heritage month, etc.)

In addition to the new hiring and creation of the equity team, the district has been determined to support the students within CCSD. The district's equity focus is driven by a simple quote, "All kids CAN...but are they?" Appendix E showcases additional equity work that has been going on at the district level.

School Level Equity Focus

Over the past few years the equity focus in Cooper County School District has moved beyond the district level and has been present at the school level as well. Schools throughout the district have been working closely with their equity team representative to transform what has been taking place at the district's schools. While many of the activities with an equity focus are taking place in the classroom, the majority of equity activities could be categorized as non-instructional. These activities can be broken down into six broad categories. These categories include: 1) trainings and meetings for teachers and administrators, 2) school-wide celebrations, 3) clubs and programs for students to participate in, 4) student focused activities, 5) school

focused activities, and 6) community focused activities. A breakdown of the various non-instructional activities, categorized by topic, can be found in Appendix F.

As schools in CCSD continue to include an equity focus on a day-to-day basis, there has been acknowledgment by district leadership that the district's schools have incorporated some components of culturally relevant instruction. Table 4.13 provides an overview of some of the steps CCSD has taken in regards to culturally relevant instruction. The table is organized by topic and includes practices related to: 1) staff professional development (to include faculty meetings and professional learning community meetings), 2) acquisition of new school resources purchased while keeping the district's diverse group of learners in mind, 3) student focused activities being conducted in addition to what may already be taking place in the classroom, and 4) instruction focused activities that have the potential to connect to the components of culturally relevant pedagogy.

District Equity Team

Current data (end-of-grade test performance, participation in advanced courses, and school discipline disproportionalities) from CCSD reveals similar statistics and gaps to what is recognized on the national level. As a result, in the spring of 2016, CCSD founded a district equity team. Between 2016 and 2020 the equity team established an equity plan, wrote mission and vision statements, and conducted professional development for district staff. The mission statement focuses the team's attention on embedding equity in all areas of the district while supporting students, advocating for social justice, and utilizing culturally relevant resources. The CCSD equity team also created six belief statements that help steer their actions. The equity team's belief statements include:

Table 4.13

Culturally Relevant Practices in CCSD

Topic	Practices Currently Being Used in CCSD
Professional Development/Faculty Meetings/Professional Learning Communities	Training for teachers for building relationships
	Sharing of equity and culturally relevant strategies in faculty meetings and PLC meetings
	Specific training and strategies to reduce discipline disproportionality at the school level
School Resources	Purposeful purchases of diverse materials in media centers
	Purposeful purchases of classroom library materials to be more diverse
Student Focused	Using student surveys to seek feedback and hear the voice of students
	Specific efforts to challenge all students to take at least one honors class - reduce gatekeeping to advanced classes
	Small groups for students of color to meet with counselor or CIS staff, etc.
	DOT activity - put up the pictures of students and ask staff which students they have a relationship with. Work to build a system where every student has one adult that they can talk to.
	Monthly recognition of students meeting goals
Instruction Focused	Use of culturally diverse texts in classroom instruction
	Guest speakers of color for assemblies and special projects
	Use of articles and lessons from Teaching Tolerance
	Dual Language Program K-12 in 5 schools

- We believe we must engage our stakeholders in better understanding the inherent historical, institutional, and cultural aspects of racism and discrimination

- We believe that it is imperative to understand the significant difference between equity and equality
- We believe every student deserves to be respected and receive what he/she needs to be successful
- We believe developing a deeper understanding of our students' traditions & cultures and recognizing our similarities and differences will bring understanding to our community
- We believe that a student's race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or legal status should not determine his/her potential
- We believe our district and our community should serve as advocates for all children regardless of their background or circumstances

The district equity team's primary goals are 1) explore barriers that the district and district's schools have in place that may limit student success, 2) take ownership for the factors that schools can control that create the greatest opportunities for student success, and 3) to foster community partnerships that help engage families and address external barriers to school success. Since 2016, the equity team has been busy implementing various activities that align to their goals. Appendix G showcases the accomplishments the equity team has achieved over the years. The school district, to showcase what the equity team has been working on, provided the accomplishments included in Appendix G. The activities included have been categorized into three broad categories. These categories include work that was equity team based, professional development sessions and trainings provided for district staff and leadership, and school and student focused activities. Appendix G also includes a short list of next steps that the CCSD equity team has identified. The ten activities identified as next steps have also been grouped into the same categories previously listed.

Teacher Questionnaire

The researcher incorporated a questionnaire to gain an understanding of what teachers throughout the district perceive they are doing in their classrooms and how these practices align with culturally relevant pedagogy. The items of the teacher questionnaire (See Appendix A) seek to identify the participants' perceptions of their frequency of use of various practices.

Participants were asked to read descriptors for each item (e.g., I make an effort to get to know my students' families and backgrounds) and then select one response from the five options provided: *never, rarely, sometimes, usually, and always* (Rhodes, 2017).

The teacher questionnaire was created using Google Forms and the necessary link was provided to CCSD district level administration for distribution. Initial communication with the district regarding teacher questionnaire distribution occurred on August 13th, 2021. At this time the researcher asked district leadership to please share the questionnaire via the district's listserv on August 16th and 17th with a completion date of August 20th. District leadership responded on August 16th and suggested postponing the distribution date until the beginning of September. On September 6th district leadership contacted the researcher and communicated that the questionnaire had been sent to all K-12 principals in the district. On September 16th only 68 teachers had responded to the teacher questionnaire. The researcher contacted the district to ask for follow up communication with each of the schools to ask for questionnaire distribution.

The teacher questionnaire remained open for responses until December 15th, 2021. When the teacher questionnaire was closed to responses there were a total of 148 total responses that consented to have their answers included in the research. There were an additional six teachers who responded to a portion of the teacher questionnaire, however, they did not consent to participation. These six responses were removed from the response totals. The 148 teachers

represented roughly 21% of the approximate 700 total teachers currently employed by Cooper County School District. Out of the 148 respondents, 114 (77%) identified as female while 34 (23%) respondents identified as male. Figure 4.2 identifies the breakdown of participants based on their racial identification. A total of 145 teachers responded to the racial identification question and the 83% identifying as White mirrors district demographic percentages.

All 148 respondents identified the grade level they currently teach. Figure 4.3 identifies that the largest group responding to the teacher questionnaire were high school teachers. This could be in part to the follow up emails sent out by the district. The second largest group responding to the teacher questionnaire is currently teaching at the elementary level. Middle grades teachers comprised 15% percent of total teachers responding.

A total of 147 teachers responded to the question regarding total teaching experience. According to Figure 4.4, teachers who have been in the profession for 16 years or longer made up 39% of the respondents. Teachers who have between 6-11 years of experience made up the second largest group (25%) of participants. Early career teachers, those with 1-5 years of experience, comprised 20% of the teachers who responded to this question. The smallest group (16%) was teachers who have been teaching for 12-16 years.

Figure 4.2

Teacher Racial Identification

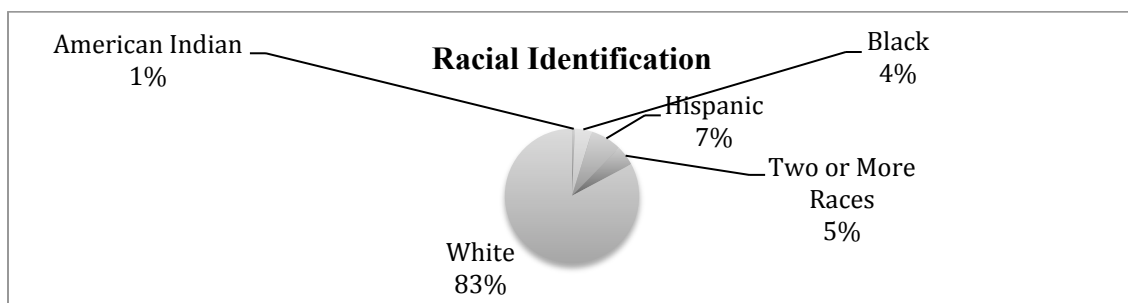
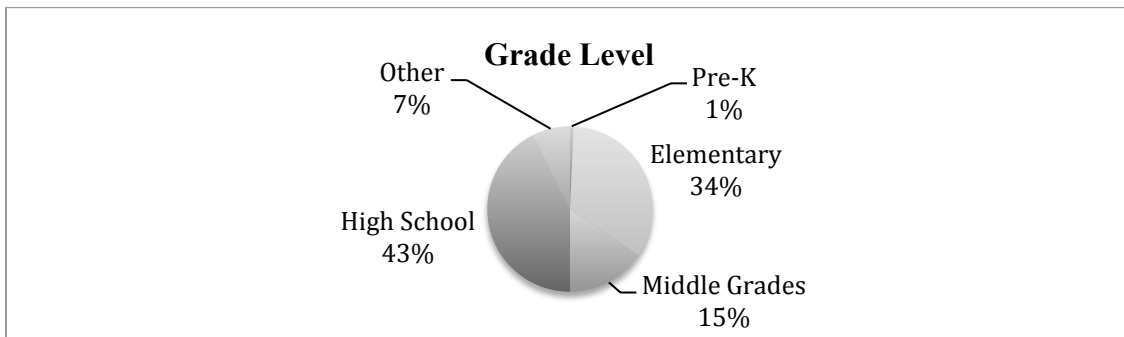


Figure 4.3

Teacher Grade Level Currently Assigned



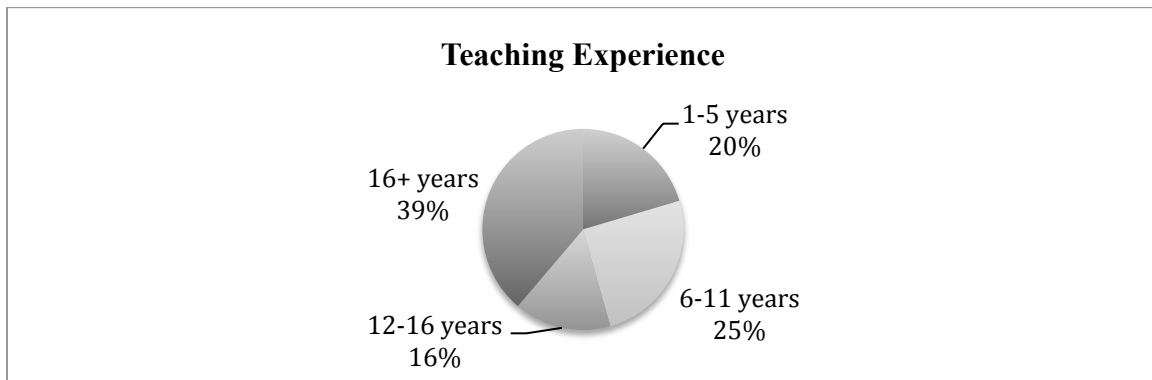
Appendix H includes the total breakdown of each question from the teacher questionnaire provided to CCSD. The data identifies the individual question, total responses for each question, and a breakdown of how teachers responded to each question. The chart included for each question includes the raw number of how many teachers selected each response choice. The chart also includes the percentage of total teachers responding to a certain option.

In looking at the responses to the teacher questionnaire (Appendix H), there were three total questions that had “5” (Always) as the option with the highest percentage of responses. These questions included #13 – Academic Success (46.9%), #14 – Positive Relationships (69.2%), and #15 – Community of Learners (46.6%). The percentage of teachers responding to each of these three questions (Question #13, 46.9%; Question #14, 69.2%; Question #15, 46.6%) was higher than any other response totals for questions #1-12. The main topics addressed with each of these questions included: communicating success, developing and maintaining trusting relationships, and creating a community of learners.

The teacher questionnaire responses of “4” (Usually) had the highest percentage of responses for eight total questions. This was the largest quantity of primary responses for any

Figure 4.4

Teaching Experience



one of the response choices. For this research, a primary response was considered to be the option with the highest number of respondents. A secondary response was considered to be the option with the second highest number of respondents. The questions with “4” as the highest percentage included: #1 – Students’ Backgrounds (44.2%), #3 – Students’ Experiences (43.8%), #5 – Learning Students’ Culture (30.6%), #6 – Current Events (45.9%), #7 – Input When Planning (34.2%), #10 – Culturally Familiar Examples (37.8%), #11 – Varied Assessment Techniques (34.5%), and #12 – Varied Instructional Methods (45.1%). Responses of “4” was the second highest response (secondary response) on five of the 15 total questions. These questions included: #2 – Student Surveys (21.8%), #4 – Student Choice (31%), #9 – Culturally Diverse Materials (30.3%), #13 – Academic Success (39.3%), and #14 - Positive Relationships (27.4%).

Appendix H shows that the response option “3” (Sometimes) had the highest percentage of responses on four questions. These questions included: #2 – Student Surveys (25.9%), #4 – Student Choice (38.6%), #8 – Cross-Cultural Comparisons (31.9%), and #9 - Culturally Diverse Materials (35.2%). When compared to the responses for all 15 questions, questions with option “3” as the primary response had the second highest total of responses. Teachers also selected “3”

as the second highest response (secondary response) on a total of six questions. These questions included: #3 - Students' Experiences (26%), #5 - Learning Students' Culture (25.9%), #6 - Current Events (21.2%), #7 - Input When Planning (28.8%), #10 - Culturally Familiar Examples (35.7%), and #11 - Varied Assessment Techniques (33.1%). This total of six questions was the highest secondary response on the teacher questionnaire.

The data collected for the teacher questionnaire shows that there were not any questions where the highest number of teachers responded with "1" (Never) or "2" (Rarely). It is worth noting that for question #8 - Cross-Cultural Comparisons, the second highest response was "2" (19%). In looking at the teacher questionnaire response data the researcher did find several questions that were of interest due to percentages of option "1" and "2" responses ranging between 5% and 22% of the total responses. Table 4.14 identifies the questions with noticeable responses for "1" (Never) and "2" (Rarely). The table also shares the total percentage of responses for each individual question. In addition to the data for the lower response ratings, the response with the highest percentage is also included as well as the topic the question pertains to. Three of the questions identified in Table 4.14 are included under both response options ("1" and "2"). By combining the totals for each of these three questions, the discrepancy in responses is much more recognizable. For example, for question #2 the highest percentage of teachers responded to option "3." However, when the two low options were clustered together, the data shows that over 30% of the teachers stated that they rarely or never use surveys to learn about their students.

Secondary Student Questionnaire Data

In an attempt to capture student voice, the researcher accessed secondary student data from Cooper County School District. The district created a questionnaire for students to gain an

understanding of what students thought their teachers were doing in their classrooms and how these practices align with culturally relevant pedagogy. The student questionnaire would also provide the district an understanding of how student viewpoints may differ from teacher perception. The items of the student questionnaire (Appendix C) were designed by the district to mirror some of the questions the researcher had used with CCSD’s teachers. Participants were asked to read descriptors for each item and then select one response from the five options provided: *never, rarely, sometimes, usually, and always*.

Table 4.14

Teacher Questionnaire Highlighted Responses

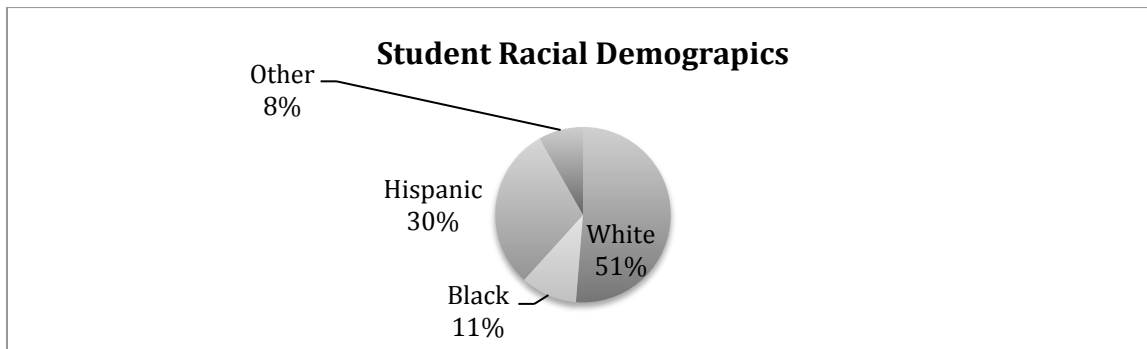
Response	Question	% Total	Response with highest %	Question Topic
“1” Never	2	12.9%	“3”	Student Surveys
	7	6.2%	“4”	Student input when planning lessons/activities
	8	9.7%	“3”	Student use of cross-cultural comparisons
	9	5.5%	“3”	Review materials for relevance and multicultural strengths/weaknesses
	11	6.3%	“4”	Variety of assessment techniques
“2” Rarely	2	19%	“3”	Student Surveys
	4	14.5%	“3”	Independent work and student choice
	5	22.4%	“4”	Learning about student cultures outside of class
	7	19.9%	“4”	Student input when planning lessons/activities
	9	15.9%	“3”	Review materials for relevance and multicultural strengths/weaknesses

The district provided the researcher with 194 student responses to their student questionnaire. Out of the 194 respondents, 92 (47.4%) identified as female, 92 (47.4%) respondents identified as male, seven (3.6%) respondents identified as non-binary, and three (1.5%) respondents preferred not to respond. Figure 4.5 identifies the breakdown of students based on their racial identification. A total of 193 students responded to the racial identification question and the 51% identifying as White mirrors district demographic percentages. The total percentages identifying as Black and Hispanic are also relatively accurate to the district student totals.

The data from the student questionnaires will be discussed in three different ways. The researcher will begin by focusing on the whole group data (Appendix I). This includes all responses from all student subgroups grouped together. The researcher will then look at the Black student subgroup data and the Hispanic student subgroup data (Appendix J) and identify how it compares to the whole group. To conclude the section, the researcher will discuss the student responses in comparison to the responses provided by the teachers on the teacher questionnaire.

Figure 4.5

Student Questionnaire Racial Demographics



Whole Group Data

Appendix I shows the whole group responses to the student questionnaire shared by CCSD. For the whole group responses, there were 11 of the 13 total questions where the most primary responses were “3” (Sometimes). The most secondary responses for one answer category were for “4” (Usually) with eight responses. In looking at responses at the other end of the spectrum, there was one question where the primary response was “1” (Never). This question, #5, addressed teachers spending time outside of class to learn about students’ culture and languages. Out of the 13 questions that students responded to there were no items where “2” (Rarely) had the highest number of primary responses.

In addition to looking at the data singularly, the researcher also grouped highest (“always” and “usually”) and lowest (“never” and “rarely”) response options together for five of the 13 questions. For each of these questions the original response with the highest percentage was “3” (Sometimes). However, for each of the five questions included in Table 4.15 when the totals for “never” and “rarely” were combined, the sum was higher than the totals for the “always” and “usually” responses. In particular, the “1”/”2” clusters for question #2 – Student Surveys and question #8 – Cross-Curricular Comparisons have totals above 40%. For the clustered data observed for the whole group, question #3 – Activities to Learn about Experiences, was only separated by 1.6%.

Subgroup Data

Subgroup data for the Black student subgroup and Hispanic student subgroup responses (Appendix J) was sorted from spreadsheet totals. After sorting out each of the subgroups, the researcher tallied response totals and calculated percentages for each response category for each

Table 4.15*“Always” and “Usually” compared to “Never” and “Rarely” Whole Group*

Question #	Topic	Group Average High	“1” + “2” Cluster	“4” + “5” Cluster
1	Families & Backgrounds	“3”	36.3%	30.0%
2	Student Surveys	“3”	43.0%	29.5%
3	Activities to learn about experiences	“3”	31.8%	30.2%
7	Planning Input	“3”	35.3%	30.0%
8	Cross-Curricular Comparisons	“3”	42.0%	21.8%

of the subgroups. The calculations were then used to analyze overall responses for each of the two subgroups.

For both subgroups, the most primary responses to the 13 questions were for option “3” (Sometimes). The Black student subgroup responded this way for 12 of the 13 questions and the Hispanic subgroup responded this way for eight of the questions. The Black subgroup never had a primary response total that was below “3.” The most secondary responses for one response option for both subgroups was for “4” (Usually). The Black subgroup had seven questions where “4” received the second highest total of responses. The Hispanic subgroup had six questions where the second highest response was “4.” Worth noting is the fact that the Black student subgroup had eight questions where their second highest response totals were either “1” (Never) or “2” (Rarely). One of these questions, #1, had the same percentage of responses to option “1” and “4,” showing that 25% of the Black student subgroup believed their teachers “usually” made an effort to get to know about them and their family and 25% believed that their teachers “never” made the effort.

On the student questionnaire there was one question where both the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup had the most responses for option “5” (Always). This question, #4, dealt with teachers allowing students to work independently on assignments and select their own learning activities. For this question, the whole group recorded the most responses for option “4.” On question #13 the Black student subgroup had their second highest response total for option “5.” On this same question, both subgroups had their highest number of responses to option “4.” This question stated that the students have classes where they are able to engage in work that will bring on social change. The topic of social change was not defined for the students and was left open to personal interpretation.

Similar to the whole group student data, the researcher also looked at high/low-grouped comparisons for the Black student subgroup and Hispanic student subgroup. For each of these two subgroups the researcher created totals for six of the 13 questions. Table 4.16 provides the totals for the Black student subgroup. For the Black student subgroup, the researcher also included clustered totals for question #5 – Learn about Culture. Despite the highest response being “3” (Sometimes), almost 44% of Black subgroup respondents selected “never” or “rarely”

Table 4.16

“Always” and “Usually” compared to “Never” and “Rarely” for Black Subgroup

Question #	Topic	Group Average High	“1” + “2” Cluster	“4” + “5” Cluster
1	Families & Backgrounds	“3”	43.75%	25.0%
2	Student Surveys	“3”	43.75%	37.0%
3	Activities to learn about experiences	“3” & “4”	25.0%	37.5%
5	Learn about Culture	“3”	43.75%	18.75%
7	Planning Input	“3”	31.25%	25.0%
8	Cross-Curricular Comparisons	“3”	37.5%	31.25%

as their response. Only 18.75% of the Black subgroup selected “always” or “usually.” The cluster for question #3 – Activities to Learn about Experiences, is also worth mentioning. The Black subgroup responded equally to option “3” and option “4.” When the researcher clustered the high and low response options, the “always” and “usually” cluster had a higher total than the “never” and “rarely” cluster. This pattern was also mirrored by the Hispanic student subgroup (Table 4.17). However, when whole group data was observed for the same question, the “1”/”2” cluster had a slightly higher sum than the “4”/”5” cluster.

As was previously mentioned, the researcher also provided grouped comparisons for the Hispanic student subgroup. Like the Black subgroup, the researcher created clustered totals for six of the 13 student questionnaire questions. The data presented in Table 4.17 provides the high/low cluster comparisons along with the question topic and the highest response selected for the subgroup. As was discussed with the Black subgroup, the inclusion of question #5 – Learn about Culture, was included in Table 4.17. For this question, the option with the highest number of responses was “3” (Sometimes). When the clusters were observed, the totals for the “never” and “rarely” cluster included 58% of the entire Hispanic student subgroup. The total for the “always” and “usually” cluster only included 10% of the Hispanic respondents. In addition to question #5, there were two additional questions (#1 – Families & Backgrounds and #8 – Cross-Cultural Comparisons) where the totals for the “1”/”2” cluster were equal to or higher than 40% of the Hispanic subgroup. The one question that had the opposite trend was question #3 – Activities to Learn about Experiences. For this question, the highest response option was “3” (Sometimes) and the cluster with the higher totals was the “4”/”5” cluster. In this instance, 36.73% of the students responded with “always” and “usually” while only 26.5% responded with “never” and “rarely.”

Table 4.17*“Always” and “Usually” compared to “Never” and “Rarely” for Hispanic Subgroup*

Question #	Topic	Group Average High	“1” + “2” Cluster	“4” + “5” Cluster
1	Families & Backgrounds	“3”	42.0%	18.0%
2	Student Surveys	“4”	28.0%	44.0%
3	Activities to learn about experiences	“3”	26.5%	36.73%
5	Learn about Culture	“3”	58.0%	10.0%
7	Planning Input	“3”	24.4%	34.72%
8	Cross-Curricular Comparisons	“3”	40.0%	24.0%

Compared to Teachers’ Responses

As was previously mentioned, the student questionnaire (Appendix C) was created using the researcher’s teacher questionnaire for teachers as a model. While all questions on the student questionnaire were not identical to those on the teacher questionnaire, there were 10 questions that were similar in nature. The researcher analyzed the relationship between these questions and looked at how the students’ responses compared to the teachers’ responses.

The researcher found that on question #8 all groups had the same option receiving the highest percentage of responses. The question stated that students were encouraged to use cross-curricular comparisons when analyzing material in their classes. This question had the highest number of responses for option “3” (Sometimes). While question #8 was the only question where all groups (teachers, whole group, Black subgroup, and Hispanic subgroup) had the same primary response, there were multiple questions where the teachers had the same response as one of the other groups. On question #2 – Student Surveys, the teachers’ responses and whole group responses both had primary responses of “3.” Despite the matching results for teachers and whole group to question #2, the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup each had the most

responses falling under option “2” (Rarely). On question #6 – Current Events, the teachers had the most responses as “4” (Usually). The whole group data and Black subgroup data both had the most responses as “3,” however; the Hispanic subgroup matched the teachers with the most responses as “4.”

For the 10 questions that were similar between questionnaires, the teachers selected higher options than the student groups on six questions. On question #4 – Independent Learning Activities, the teachers’ highest response (“3”) was lower than the three student groups discussed. Table 4.18 provides an overview of four questions that stood out to the researcher. For each of these questions, the teachers’ primary responses (Teacher “P”) was “4” and the primary responses for each student group (Whole Group “P”, Black SSG “P”, Hispanic SSG “P”) were mostly “3.” However, when looking at the students’ secondary responses (Whole Group “S”, Black SSG “S”, Hispanic SSG “S”, the discrepancy in choices – was much greater. This was especially seen with the Black student subgroup and the repeated selection of “1” for a response choice. Table 4.18 also identifies the teachers’ secondary responses (Teacher “S”) for comparison to the student groups.

Table 4.18

Teacher/Student Questionnaire Comparison

Q#	Teacher “P”	Teacher “S”	Whole Group “P”	Whole Group “S”	Black SSG “P”	Black SSG “S”	Hispanic SSG “P”	Hispanic SSG “S”
1	4 (44.2%)	5 (42.9%)	3 (33.7)	2 (21.8%)	3 (31.25%)	1 & 4 (25%)	3 (40%)	2 (32%)
3	4 (43.8%)	3 (26%)	3 (38%)	4 (24.5%)	3 & 4 (37.5%)	1 & 2 (12.5%)	3 (36.7)	4 (30.61)
5	4 (30.6%)	3 (25.9%)	1 (42.5%)	3 (24.4%)	3 (37.5%)	1 (31.25%)	1 (34%)	3 (32%)
7	4 (34.2%)	3 (28.8%)	3 (34.7%)	4 (20.5%)	3 (43.75%)	1 (18.75%)	3 (40.1%)	4 (28.6%)

Interviews

During data collection the researcher used a 15-question, semi-structured interview to gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant practices. The final question of the teacher questionnaire was used as a recruitment tool to gauge teachers' interest in having a follow up conversation. Teachers were asked to include their name and contact information if they wanted to be considered for follow up interviews. Out of the 148 teacher questionnaire responses there were 46 teachers who stated they would be willing to have an additional conversation. Because the researcher's focus was on interviewing middle school and high school teachers, there were not any invitations sent out to elementary teachers. The researcher sent out a total of 18 invitations to middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District. Out of these 18, a total of 12 teachers responded and agreed to participate in a short interview lasting one to three sessions.

The 12 interviews that were conducted lasted between 40 and 70 minutes. Nine of the 12 interviews were held virtually over Zoom and the remaining three were conducted over the phone. Out of the 12 participants, 10 identified as White and two identified as being of two or more races. Seven of the participants identified as female and five identified as male. After initial communication, each of the teachers was allowed to create a pseudonym. For any of the teachers who did not create a pseudonym, one was selected by the researcher and used for the duration of the study. Table 4.19 provides an overview of each of the participants. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then analyzed the 12 transcriptions for common themes related to culturally relevant pedagogy.

Table 4.19*Participant Identification*

Participant	School Level	Years Teaching	Race	Gender
Erin	High School	12-16	White	Female
Eve	Middle School	1-5	White	Female
Alicia	High School	16+	White	Female
Karen	Middle School	12-16	Two or more races	Female
Scott	Middle School	16+	White	Male
Sean	High School	1-5	Two or more races	Male
Kayla	High School	1-5	White	Female
Eddie	High School	6-11	White	Male
Kevin	High School	12-16	White	Male
Justin	High School	1-5	White	Male
Jane	High School	16+	White	Female
Claire	High School	1-5	White	Female

Themes Identified

To gain greater insight into the interview participants' perceptions of using culturally relevant practices, the researcher created four broad categories based on the themes that had been identified in the interviews. The first three categories were based on Ladson-Billings' three propositions of culturally relevant pedagogy (Academic Achievement, Cultural Competence, and Sociopolitical Consciousness). A fourth category, Barriers to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, was also included for analysis. Table 4.20 identifies these major categories as well as the individual topics that the researcher aligned with each. The following section explores the interviews and explains how each of the following topics was represented.

Discussion of Themes

As was previously mentioned, this section will explore the various topics that were identified during the interviews. During this discussion the researcher will define the various themes. The researcher will then identify key comments that were shared by the participants

Table 4.20

Interview Themes for Discussion

Academic Achievement	Cultural Competence	Sociopolitical Consciousness	Barriers to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
Academic Success	Funds of Knowledge	A Site for Social Change	District PD
Instructional Practices	Learning about Students	Exposure to other Perspectives	Individual Hesitancy
	Classroom Environment	Life-long Skills	Isolated Celebrations
	Community Resources		Resources

during the interviews. These comments may summarize the views of the bulk of the participants or they may represent an outlier view that was expressed by one or two teachers. The researcher will also provide a connection to culturally relevant pedagogy and how the comments align with the research.

Academic Achievement

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Ladson-Billings (2002) stated that academic achievement is seen through intellectual growth and the students' ability to produce knowledge. Teachers exhibiting this proposition maintain high expectations for all of their students. Teachers should also incorporate classroom practices that align with students' cultural knowledge and allow students to maintain cultural connections. During the interviews, the researcher identified three topics that could be connected to academic achievement. These topics include: academic success, instructional practices, and resources.

Academic Success. The theme of academic success was identified during the conversations with several teachers and it showcased examples of teachers wanting the best for all students. This theme connects to several of the components of culturally relevant pedagogy discussed by Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018). Karen shared an example of one of her

students who thrives in a particular class activity. During the activity, students are given a motivational quote and asked to share what the quote means to them. If they don't understand the quote, they must share what parts they don't understand. Karen explained that this activity could challenge some students, while giving others an opportunity to shine.

I have one student who really struggles as a reader...The things that she writes on her quotes are so insightful and so mature and I always just brag on her. And every time she reads hers out loud the other kids they applaud and they're like, 'who are you? You're not a 6th grader.' They're just amazing. And if that's the only time all day that she feels successful in a school environment then I'll do it every day just for that moment.

By providing this opportunity for the student to experience success and to showcase some of her academic talents, Karen is exhibiting the culturally relevant characteristics of being both validating and multidimensional.

During the interviews, two teachers spoke about how they recognize the strengths of all students and not just those who have been identified as academically or intellectually gifted (AIG). While these practices may go against conventional belief, these teachers believe in the equity of their actions. The approaches of Eve and Scott align with Gay's (2018) characteristic of being transformative. Eve explained that she gives "opportunities for students who aren't in the AIG program to kind of get ahead with the lesson," so they see that they are also being challenged with advanced material when appropriate. Scott shared an approach he takes in an attempt to differentiate instruction for all students and not just those with AIG accommodations.

I like to go into classrooms to just do activities for the whole group because there's a growing philosophy in AIG that it's not something that you are and you're like that forever. It might be something that depends on what you're talking about or thinking

about is whether you have giftedness. And I think that's a form of differentiation is providing it to all.

Two of the teachers who were interviewed, Sean and Eddie, spoke about approaches they take to challenge their students. Sean explained that he maintains high standards for all of his students as part of his belief that "students need to be challenged." He also shared that "having a space full of rigor," is an extremely important part of his teaching philosophy. Eddie emphatically discussed how his passion for helping his students create knowledge is a key component of his approach to teaching and helping his students achieve academic success.

I'm making them think more than they want and I hope that that's what they take away... that I don't settle for mediocrity. I don't settle for students putting in enough to get by. I push students at the varied levels of their capability. I push the students so that they have to take a step to be an intellectual.

Instructional Practices. Gay (2018) explained that culturally responsive teaching should be transformational. These practices should move beyond the traditional education classroom approaches with respect to students' of color. Culturally responsive teaching should also be validating and should incorporate a variety of instructional strategies and connect them to different learning styles (Gay, 2018). Teachers who engage in culturally relevant teaching should look for connections to help their students connect with the content and should avoid simply reciting facts. During the interviews, the 12 teachers shared the various instructional approaches they take with their students. While some practices seemed quite student centered, other practices were geared towards what the teacher felt worked best.

During the interviews, four teachers specifically identified that they favor activities in their classroom where students are able to work collaboratively. The cooperative learning was

characterized as being both work being done in pairs and in small groups. Scott named what goes on a lot of the time in his classroom as “collaborative sense making.” He explained that during this time, students “are sharing ideas or thinking about what other people are saying and trying to fit that into their schema.” Eve emphasized that her classroom set up allows for her to “easily pivot from five minutes of whole class instruction” to breaking out into a small group to help construct knowledge.

Kevin mentioned that by leaving the majority of his classroom assignments open to a lot of trial and error and student collaboration, he typically doesn’t utilize a lot of direct instruction until the students have had a chance to get started on a project. He explained that, “it’s not until after they’ve started that I’ll start to do examples of, ‘do this, this, and this.’ Or ‘try this’.” By keeping the assignments “vague enough” and forcing the students to resort to “problem solving,” Kevin finds that his students are able to push themselves to succeed. Kevin did mention that there are certain times when he will incorporate direct instruction. If “it’s a technical thing, like we’re doing perspective...everything has to go to the vanishing point...that’s something I will demonstrate and I’ll show them because everybody has to do that.”

Slightly different from many of the other teachers, Jane characterizes her instruction style as falling “under the big umbrella of lecture based.” In her math classroom, Jane typically has a script that she has prepared to go through during the course of a class period. Despite what may seem like a very rigid structure, Jane pointed out that it is “also very impromptu as well. Like whatever reactions they’re having I’ll adjust.” So in addition to delivering the content, Jane is paying attention to the room and responding to “lots of questions.”

During conversations, seven teachers explained that in their classrooms student choice is very important during daily instruction. In some classrooms, the choice offered to students

involved the order they would complete the week's tasks. For example, Karen explains to her students that there are certain assignments that she would like them to accomplish in a given week. The students are able to select their "menu" and complete the tasks in the order of their choosing. Erin also provides certain tasks for her students to complete, however, they are related to a book that they have selected on their own. The students are then able to make the decision of what their final product will look like for a given unit.

Kayla spoke at length about how she uses "mentor texts" with her students to help support their growth as readers and writers. For many writing assignments, Kayla allows her students to "choose whatever they want to write and then they choose their own mentor text." She explained that there are times that the mentor text that a student selects may not look like a traditional text; however, they are still challenged with the same assignments. For example, there have been students in the past who want to write a cookbook. These students are able to use published cookbooks as their mentor texts and use them to scaffold the necessary writing.

Cultural Competence

Previously introduced in Chapter 2, the cultural competence component is a students' ability to understand and respect the culture they are from while learning in the school setting (Ladson-Billings, 2002). Teachers who are able to engage with this proposition are able to recognize and validate students' culture in the classroom environment as a way to foster student engagement. Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) point out that teachers whose classrooms successfully exhibit cultural competence are the ones who tap into their students' cultural funds of knowledge to make the classroom less alienating. During the interviews the researcher identified four topics related to cultural competence. These topics include: student funds of knowledge, learning about students, classroom environment, and community resources.

Student Funds of Knowledge. Students come into the classroom with a specific collection of skills, abilities, and lived experiences, which combine to create funds of knowledge. These funds of knowledge can be used to help a student construct knowledge based on their lived experiences (Freire, 1998; Milner, 2017). When a teacher is able to access students' funds of knowledge, the student is being allowed to develop their own voice and perspective that will allow them to engage in the learning context (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Milner, 2017). During the interviews, four teachers spoke specifically about learning from their students and incorporating what they learned into their instruction. Kevin and Erin spoke about why learning about and learning from their students was important. Kevin shared how this process is integral to his approach to planning and teaching:

Most important about the teaching to me is knowing my kids. Getting to know where they're from, not just ethnical backgrounds, but also neighborhoods. That helps me kind of plan the lesson out to what I need to do or what I need to learn to make it more engaging for them.

Erin communicated that she believes in using the skill set her students possess as a way to help them in their learning. The following example shows how Erin uses her students' cultural practices to help facilitate learning in the classroom and help the students become what Ladson-Billings (2002) refers to as being bicultural.

I personally think that it is very important to take what students bring to the table in my instruction. Especially since I do a lot of language instruction and I do grammar instruction. So, I try to teach grammar in a descriptive way rather than a prescriptive way. So, recognizing that if I tell a student, 'don't use the word y'all because the word y'all isn't a real word.' They're going to think that I don't have any authority because they've

been using this word and everyone in their family has been using this word their entire lives and the world didn't end. Everybody could communicate with each other. So, instead of saying a certain type of speech or a certain type of writing is wrong, I pull in what they are bringing to the table or encourage them to bring examples that they already have and then talk about, 'ok, instead, if I'm writing for someone in Capital City who's grading my End of Course exam, what type of writing is that person going to be looking for?'

Learning about Students. Taking time to learn about the students in the classroom is an important component of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (2009) explained that the learning process should extend beyond simply learning students' names and birthdays. Learning about students will allow a teacher to create a connectedness that may lead to developing an instructional plan that will motivate all students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Gay (2018) also emphasized the importance of student-teacher relationships and included it as a component of the multidimensional characteristic (Table 2.2). When building relationships, Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) emphasized that the relationships formed between students and teachers should expand beyond the classroom.

During the interviews, all of the teachers acknowledged various practices that they used to get to know about their students. Erin spoke about her use of a slide show assignment for her AVID class that asks students to show "all of the people in their immediate family...where they are specifically living and what their current home situation is like." The assignment also asks the students about potential obstacles from them attending college. Three of the teachers identified that they used a type of "getting to know you" survey that each student completes at

the beginning of the class. For Claire, the survey was more than a simple getting to know you survey and was used to bridge into classroom engagement. Claire tells her students,

‘You filled out this form about what's important to you and what makes you angry,’ it's very social and emotional learning and at the end of that, ‘we see these themes of family, financial stability, and friendship. So how can we explore those themes in what you're making?’

Karen also opts for beginning the year with a student survey, however, once the first few days of school have passed she incorporates another technique to learn more about her students. This practice, unlike many of the practices identified, moves beyond the classroom environment in an attempt at fostering the student-teacher relationship.

I do a little getting to know you student survey. But I always have a lunch date; time with the teacher is what I call it, where I sit down with each student individually...because you know surveys are only so good. They can only tell you so much of what that student is thinking at that time.

During the interviews, six teachers discussed a less formal approach to learning about their students. Each of these teachers mentioned that by sitting and talking with their students, they are able to learn about them and what is going on in their lives. These six teachers acknowledged that the conversation typically took place in the classroom during a typical school day. Sean explained that he uses this non-instructional time to foster student-teacher and student-student relationships.

We talk about things that aren't necessarily related to guitar or band, and talk about what's going on in their lives, and occasionally in my life or what's going on at school. So we

spend a lot of time getting to know each other and getting to know the people in the room.

Kevin shared his approach for getting to know more about his students. As was previously discussed, Kevin values what he learns from his students and uses their funds of knowledge to build his lessons. When it comes to learning about his students, Kevin explained that he had to “dig himself into the students’ world.” He spoke about going to neighborhoods and visiting students at their houses and looking for ways to gain access to their culture. One experience he shared was about being invited to a celebration by a Hispanic student.

And I was like, ‘ok, we’ll go.’ And they were making fun of me and they were like, ‘you’re gonna be the only White guy there.’ And I said ‘it’s ok, I’m good with it.’ And they said, ‘and you don’t speak Spanish!’ And I said, ‘I’ll figure it out, we’ll figure it out.’ So me and my family went and we had a blast. So, I said that’s just what I’ve got to do. I’ve got to emerge myself in it.

Classroom Environment. For the purpose of this discussion, the classroom environment is considered to be the surroundings and conditions within the classroom. In a culturally relevant classroom, students are taught to accept and validate various cultures. The teacher works to create a space that allows for various learning opportunities. The culturally relevant teacher recognizes that learning is not static and creates opportunities for students to learn from the teacher and other students, and for the teacher to learn from the students. This environment also allows for collaboration between students. In regards to classroom décor, Ladson-Billings (2009) speaks about decorating the classroom with posters of cultural heroes and icons.

During the interviews, the researcher was able to identify several responses that pertained to physical environment, sense of community, learning within the classroom. In describing their

classroom environments, several teachers were able to identify a flexible environment where students are working on different assignments. A common description that came up for the classroom environment was “organized chaos.” In her description, Erin shared the flexibility of her classroom allows for lots of student engagement and a variety of activities to be going on at the same time.

All of my furniture is on wheels. Students could potentially be in groups, or they could be paying attention to the board, or they could be doing all sorts of flexible things. So, if you just peek in for a minute it’s very chaotic looking...So, there’s a lot of movement going on, but it’s controlled movement in the environment.

Sean also discussed how his students frequently were working on various assignments that were dependent on their current standing in the class. Sean explained that noise was not an issue for him when trying to do what is best for his students.

I personally don't mind the loud classroom, so a lot of times I have students working on completely different things at different times. Whether it's assignments that they're making up, or if they are more of my advanced students...things that they are doing that are on their own or special projects that I had given them.

Music was a common topic that was identified as an important component of the classroom and a way to allow students to feel comfortable in the learning environment. In describing her classroom environment, Karen mentioned that, “there’s usually music playing in the background. Music that the students have requested.” Kevin also included music as an important element in facilitating learning in his classroom. “There's going to be music playing. You're going to see kids with headphones plugged into their phones listening to music. And everybody is going to be at different paces...even different projects.”

Some of the teachers identified certain traits of their classroom set up that are designed for their preferences. These preferences tend to lack the characteristics of a culturally responsive classroom. In describing his classroom environment, Eddie shared a very teacher centered description.

So they're [desks] all angled so that they're facing that point [center of the room] and that's because that's where I stand and when I speak in that spot they need to be paying attention. They know that and we go over this at the beginning...so I do a lot of just subconscious expectations...they know that when I step into the middle of the room they need to be paying attention when I go over the board.

The description that Jane gave of her classroom seemed to be more of her preference for an environment where she teaches best and less about an environment that is culturally relevant to her students.

I'm not very decorative so my room's pretty institutional. My desks are in rows. All of that is COVID response. Because I was trying to space them to be safe as possible. I do usually keep the rows it's just my style and it makes my travel through the room easier. Jane did follow up with her comments by saying that during a class period there are times when the desks are moved from their rows when students are working on a group activity or other assignment. At the end of the class the students are asked to return the desks to their original rows.

An important concept that was discussed by multiple teachers was forming a sense of community within the classroom environment. Eve explained that she sets her room up using “a coffee shop atmosphere,” in an attempt to form an environment that is calming and welcoming. From there, Eve stresses the importance of students showing respect for themselves and each

other. To further build on the sense of community, Eve mentioned the shared supply bins and shared snack bins that can be accessed at any time by the students.

Eddie also stressed the importance of forming a community within his classroom. He spoke about his classroom being an “inviting community” that is open to students of all beliefs where everyone has to pull together to achieve success. He emphasizes this point to his students by having them reference the large world map hanging on the wall and allowing them to “see just how magnificent and large this earth is and just how infinitesimally small a single nation is. A single state. A single being.”

Claire shared a different example of students forming a sense of community within the classroom. The example discussed during the interview was not the typical group work scenario of students working together. Instead, Claire explained that because her students are usually working on different types of projects she will sometimes rely on student-to-student instruction when she is unable to immediately help a student. The opportunity to help teach another student has proven to be a form of empowerment for students in Claire’s classroom.

Nine times out of 10 when I asked a student to teach another student, that kid who I ask to help, is like suddenly 25 years old. They're like super mature, highly effective, they remember all the important things. It's as if there was a test. So I love doing that. I also know that it's good for them. It feels good to be given responsibility.

Community Resources. Ladson-Billings (2009) addressed the importance of the greater community to culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings claimed that teachers who exhibit culturally relevant pedagogy are able to help their students make connections between the class content and the greater community that students live in. The teacher should find multiple ways to make connections between the curriculum and students’ lives that illustrate representation of

students' culture (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teachers exhibiting culturally relevant pedagogy may collaborate with the greater community to better serve the students in the classroom.

Out of the 12 teachers the researcher spoke with, three teachers acknowledged different ways that they have engaged with family or community resources as a way to facilitate and improve their lessons. Two teachers specifically spoke to the cultures of their students and using the resources to help facilitate learning. Alicia, a dance teacher, spoke about being able “to do some African dance” with her students. However, she explained that she was not “that good at it.” She mentioned that in an effort to provide a better opportunity for her students, “the Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble would come and teach a workshop on African dance.” Another example of using community resources involved bringing in a friend who does breakdancing. “He’s a professional B-Boy. Like, that’s what he does. And I’ve contracted him to come in and teach breakdance.” These activities both provide examples of tapping into cultural resources of the greater community to help improve the learning of students.

Karen shared an activity that she does with her students when they are covering heritage and culture during one of their units. Karen explained that, “I solicit family members to send in recipes...or stories of traditions...or stories of courageous family members who have done things.” The activity typically serves as a moment of pride for her students to share something about their culture or families with their classmates, but Karen mentioned that, “sometimes it’s a learning experience for the students in a different way...because they’re like, ‘well, I didn’t know that. How come you never told me my uncle was in World War II?’”

Eddie mentioned that for an upcoming course that he will be teaching he has been creating a plan to incorporate community resources to facilitate student learning.

I have been putting together a network of stockbrokers and financial advisors and small business owners and bank employees...I've been putting together a web of people that I'm actually intending to invite as a guest to the school. And I would like somebody once a week.

While the plan discussed doesn't reference students' culture, it does draw from the expertise of the immediate community to help his students learning.

Sociopolitical Consciousness

The proposition of sociopolitical consciousness works to help students identify, comprehend, and critique social inequities. Chapter 2 explained that if teachers are to successfully integrate the development of sociopolitical consciousness among their students, teachers must recognize specific inequities and the causes. The teachers must then use this knowledge, along with that of the curriculum, to create a learning experience that is impactful to the students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). During the interviews the researcher identified four topics that pertained to sociopolitical consciousness. These topics include: a site for social change, exposure to different perspectives, and life-long skills.

A Site for Social Change. In addressing the area of sociopolitical consciousness, both Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) addressed the need for culturally relevant teachers to use the classroom as a site to create and maintain social change. To be able to do this, the teacher must possess an understanding of oppressive structures and practices and be able to work with the students in an attempt to overcome these practices. During the interviews, the researcher was careful not to define social change for the participants. When asked, the researcher told the participants that the question was open to their interpretation. While this question forced the teachers to think deeply about their situation, some of the teachers agreed that their classroom

could be viewed as a place for social change to take place. Perhaps the example of social change having the greatest reach was an activity Karen did with her students. The class project connected their reading of the book *Refugee* to a fundraiser.

I had the students create T-shirts...and they all got to create T-shirts that represented or stated a theme from that book. And I printed them out and all the kids got to vote, out of the 6th grade, on what they thought was the best...the best design...the best theme that really captures what the author is trying to get us to learn about the world. And then we sold them. We sold these t-shirts to people in the community, at our school, wherever...and then we took the money left over after the cost of the t-shirts and donated it to UNICEF to go to a refugee camp.

Karen stressed to the researcher, and to her students, how this was a great example of showing her students how a group of 6th graders from a small school in Cooper County could create a project that would impact people around the world. She linked this to her teaching of the quote, “If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.” While sharing the quote she reiterated that, “it doesn’t matter how young you think you are, or how poor, or how smart. Everybody is capable of making a difference and making an impactful change...sometimes you have to be the mosquito and be persistent.”

While the example Karen shared was the only one that made an immediate change beyond the school walls, multiple teachers shared examples that had to do with empowering students and setting examples for them to become better people in life. Sean spoke about how the heterogeneous characteristics of his classroom were an anomaly compared to the school as a whole. He hoped that what was exhibited within his classroom would serve as an example, and bring about social change, for the whole school.

So, I think in that way and kind of a passive way, which is why I feel it may not be appropriate for this question. Like yes, we're creating a space where students can feel comfortable and know what it's like when different students from different races and different backgrounds interact and hopefully are building a model for that for the rest of the school.

This example identified the current structure of the school and showed how Sean was working with his students to be the example that would help dismantle this system. Justin also addressed how he sees social change taking place within this classroom. He identified that large-scale change may not be evident right now, however, he hopes that small acts and behaviors over time could impact his students for the rest of their lives. He explained his approach and how he works with both students of color and White students.

So I just try to open their minds up to different points of views. Because I don't expect to be... change happens slowly overtime so I'm just hoping to plant seeds with people and trying to care about others. Like I'm not going to make you a non- or an anti racist overnight but... I don't know I just try to get them to think about other people.

While these teachers discussed ways that their classrooms could empower their students and ultimately bring about social change, there were some teachers who acknowledged that their classrooms would not be viewed as a place to bring about social change. Kevin explained that challenges put in place by the district kept him from being able to make lasting changes.

The social thing...it's hard to bring it to your school when I feel that the school system is putting a couple strikes against you already with the clientele that you have. You can't... There is there in a Hispanic community, or a black community, or a rural community, or

you're in the rich community. And none of these intertwine at all. I truly believe it's purposely that way. I've never seen a district like this.

Jane discussed that she was not against different forms of social change taking place and that she thought, “conversation about change could happen” in her classroom. However, despite this openness, she did not believe she could be the one who could successfully make it happen.

I believe conversation about change could safely happen in my room but I'm not the one to spearhead something that I'm not comfortable with. This is who I was born into being. My skin, eyes, and hair. And sometimes I feel I would be false in saying things that perhaps didn't reflect my own background.

Exposure to Different Perspectives. The current influence that most mainstream education policies and practices provide is a Eurocentric focus within the classroom (Gay, 2018). Gay (2018) explained that most curriculums in the United States are reflective of a Eurocentric culture that highlights the perspectives, experiences, and privilege of the demographically dominant group. By using culturally responsive teaching, a teacher should look for ways to correct these misconceptions and exclusion and look for ways to push for equity and social justice (Gay, 2018). Many of the teachers the researcher met with discussed various ways that they incorporate different perspectives within their classroom.

During the conversations with the CCSD teachers, seven specifically referenced the books in their classroom. These books provided students diverse perspectives that they may not otherwise have encountered or that they may not typically find in the classroom. Eve talked about her goal of getting “more equity based literature and resources from authors of color and LGBTQ authors.” Her hope for doing this was to provide all students with an opportunity to “find a book that relates to them in the classroom.” Eve explained that when she first started her

teaching career, “all of the novels that they were teaching were very whitewashed and about a very specific type of person.” She quickly identified that these books were not “relatable for the majority of our students,” and a change needed to occur to increase engagement.

At multiple times during the interview, Kayla discussed the power of the books she uses and provides to her students in her classroom. She uses the books as a tool to empower her students as they make their own selections and to validate their individual cultures. By having books by Black and Latinx authors, Kayla provides an opportunity for students to read books written by people who look like them. This approach shows the students “that there's great books out there written by people that look like you,” and every book does not have to be written by a White author. To increase this opportunity for representation, Kayla usually only incorporates texts written by non-White authors in her classroom. She mentioned using books and stories from Mindy Kaling, Langston Hughes, Trevor Noah, and non-White poets.

In addition to providing texts that match their students' cultures, several teachers discussed the importance of exposing their students to other perspectives. These teachers recognized that there are times when these perspectives may represent less than 50% of the class population of students or may not represent any of the class' current students. The teachers explained that this emancipatory approach is designed to expand their students' boundaries and help increase their understanding of other cultures. Karen mentioned that she is very intentional in the resources she selects. She included that she will always try to “seek out characters that either represent them [her students] in some form or fashion or are something that they never even considered as a group of people. Like Aboriginal people from Australia.”

Similar to the approach of Karen, Claire also used the word “intentional” in discussing her attempts to make sure she is representing “diverse perspectives in the actual people that we

study.” Claire explained that the majority of her school population identify as White, so she believes it is important to share diverse resources with her students. While this may not appear as culturally relevant to her students, Claire makes it “an active point” to teach about, “Black artists, and Latinx artists, and African artists, and disabled artist, and LGBTQIA artists, and non-binary artists.”

Life-long Skills. Another theme that was present in the interviews had to do with the teachers helping their students be prepared for life outside of school. Six (Erin, Scott, Sean, Eddie, Kevin, and Claire) of the participants specifically mentioned wanting to help their students develop skills that would help them in the future. Some had more of an academic connotation while they discussed “preparing them for future learning” (Scott). One example of this was seen as Erin discussed her approach to teaching her English students.

I don’t particularly care what Othello says in Act 4 Scene 2. We’re just using that as a vehicle to practice some other communication piece or writing piece or something you’re going to need more long term. So, I think my philosophy centers more around the durable skills students would be able to use and making sure those are being delivered

Other participants, like Eddie and Claire, spoke about helping their students build the skills that would allow them to navigate real world situations and decision-making, as they grow older.

Claire addressed how she teaches her classes and what her ultimate goal is when working with her art students.

It's just everyday life stuff. So I want them to be able to find those solutions themselves with confidence. Which is a very practical point about art specifically. Less about art I want my students to feel competent in complex order of operation decision making... critical thinking problem solving reverse engineering.

Two other teachers addressed compassion and caring and why they believe it is crucial for them to teach their students these citizenship skills in addition to any curricular content in the classroom. Justin identified that the current challenges faced by his students have led him to find a focus that isn't 100% focused on his content. Justin stated that he "would rather teach them [students] how to be good people...like I guess the citizenship idea...but a lot of students struggle with learning how to behave socially." Karen's thoughts expand on this idea as she shared her experience with helping her students develop life-long skills and build a sense of community within the classroom.

My ultimate goal...besides hoping that they are better students at the end of the year...is that I really want them to be more compassionate and caring citizens...I tell them, 'I care about your grades, I care about how you do, but I truly care about you as a person. Because that grade on your report card means nothing if you leave and you're not thinking about the world and each other and how to treat each other in a different way.'

Barriers to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In addition to the topics discussed that were directly connected to Ladson-Billings' three propositions of culturally relevant pedagogy, the researcher also noticed that several participants spoke about certain barriers preventing them or colleagues from engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy. These barriers can be categorized as: individual hesitancy or personal challenges, isolated celebrations, district professional development, and resources.

Individual Hesitancy/Challenges. As the research discussed, one of the forms of resistance to incorporating culturally relevant practices may come in the form of implementation anxiety. Implementation anxiety is typically seen when teachers are concerned about certain difficulties they may have when it comes to adding these practices to their classroom routine.

The anxiety may not be connected to an unwillingness to try, however, teachers may not be equipped with preparation to feel comfortable using culturally relevant practices in their classroom. Individual hesitancy was something the researcher noticed during conversations with two teachers in particular.

While Erin and Scott both shared several practices during the interviews that would be considered to be culturally relevant, they both acknowledged difficulties in certain aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. Erin addressed her biggest challenge by saying that despite trying to expose her students to other cultures from around the world, she's not "as good at consistently having students bring their own culture into the activity." Scott mentioned that his biggest challenges come from the gaps between generations. Because of the age difference, trying to find activities that will be engaging has become a challenge for Scott. He summarized these thoughts by stating that "it's difficult, as the older I get the farther I am removed from that age and it's hard to put myself in their shoes...that's what I try to do." So despite the challenge of connecting to his students, Scott still makes attempts at bringing relevant materials to the classroom.

Isolated Celebrations. The research discussed emphasized that culturally relevant pedagogy should not consist of a series of isolated celebrations that are marked by eating ethnic food or participating in a cultural dance or other meaningless tasks (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Stairs et al, 2012). During the interviews the researcher identified that these very isolated celebrations have become a barrier for some teachers in Cooper County School District. For example, Eve discussed how her school was guilty of really pushing culture during a particularly themed month. She mentioned how she didn't agree with this simplistic practice, however, at this stage in her early teaching career she didn't find herself prepared to do better.

I've noticed that schools will really drill down into multicultural content during certain months. So, like, Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, and I don't mind doing that, but I don't want to convey the message that we should only celebrate certain communities during certain months... To be honest, right now, I'm just incorporating the Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month activities that our school is providing for us. While those are great, I feel like I need to do a better job finding my own resources and pieces of literature to incorporate into instruction that reflect different viewpoints.

Scott and Kevin shared that while they do not find the isolated celebrations to be indicative of their multicultural teaching practices, they do notice that some of their colleagues in CCSD are quick to resort to a themed month as an attempt to show cultural diversity in their curricular content.

I am not a fan of just, like, hitting the holidays. We just came out of Hispanic Heritage month. And, you know, I know some teachers they mean well, but their idea of multicultural may be Day of the Dead or talking about tacos or something.

Kevin expressed that he incorporates multicultural instruction on a regular basis. He uses these practices as a way of making the content in his classroom relevant to his students. He explained that just glossing over a topic or only incorporating a topic one month out of the year does not connect to a diverse student population.

I don't want to pick it just to hit it on the surface level. It has to be meaningful. It's not like I want to pick February, Black History Month, and then that's when I'm gonna bring out the Black history. No! We do it all the time. It's when it becomes relevant. A month doesn't make it relevant.

District Professional Development. The research discussed the role leadership can play in the success of implementation of a program of culturally relevant pedagogy. Khalifa et al. (2016) spoke about the necessity for leadership to promote these programs and support teachers as they gain new skills. In Cooper County School District, there has been an attempt to support teachers as they learn about culturally relevant pedagogy. As part of their district equity initiative, CCSD has implemented a number of practices, including professional development, in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy. Two of the teachers who participated in the interviews discussed how the district's professional development has left them feeling unprepared to successfully engage in culturally relevant practices.

Jane brought up multiple concerns with the professional development she had received from the district sessions. Part of her concern could be considered related to hesitancy of the unknown of implementing the practices, but she also mentioned that she feels underprepared to make the necessary adjustments.

It's one of the things that I feel like I don't do a good job of. But I also feel like I have no idea what that looks like in a math classroom...I think it's very superficial when people tell me to make my classroom more culturally inclusive by just changing the topics of my word problems. Like, that seems funny to me and I think the kids would see right through that.

When asked specifically about some of the training she received, Jane shared that with one of the trainings the district had created modules for the teachers to complete by a given date. The teachers were able to either read a couple articles or watch a video. Once the teachers had completed the first part they were asked to complete a Google Form related to the assignment.

For Jane, the training did a good job of explaining the topic, but did not prepare her for classroom implementation.

You've described culturally responsive teaching but you've not given me anything I can implement in my classroom. Like here's the definition. Here's the definition again. Here's the definition of the definition. And I just feel like its description. And I have nothing that I can take and act on or make adjustments with.

Claire also found that the professional development sessions provided by the district lacked substance for teachers to be able to incorporate various practices into their lesson plans. She explained that during the professional development sessions,

[the district] will talk a lot about incorporating examples of persons of color into your pedagogy, into your examples, into your lessons, and that's all that they will say and all that they will give me. Make sure you teach about a black person too.

For teachers like Jane and Claire, the willingness to learn about and incorporate culturally relevant practices into their teaching is present, however, they believe they are not being provided with the necessary tools to be able to completely move forward.

Resources. Gay's (2018) Character Profile of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Table 2.2) includes multiple references to the resources teachers are using in their culturally responsive classrooms. Table 2.2 mentions the use of a wide variety of resources that are reflective of multicultural practices and that allow students to see themselves in the content. Several teachers included the resources they have in their classroom as ways that they are able to engage their students in diverse content. Despite these examples of success, some teachers found that the resources they currently have or have previously relied on may not be the best for reaching a culturally diverse student population. Scott explained the difficulty he has because some of the

items used in the past are “resources that I think kids need to know about.” He constantly finds himself wanting to tell his students, “you need to know about this song, or this radio show, or this comic book.” However, he now holds back on some of the resources he shares. Not because they are inappropriate, but because, “there’s not a lot of cultural diversity in those resources from years ago.”

Eve also acknowledges the importance of including multicultural resources and content in her classroom. The challenge she finds this year is gaining access to such resources. During the interview, Eve mentioned that she doesn’t “have a ton of resources to make sure other cultures are always being incorporated into the classroom.” While this may currently be a barrier to certain components of culturally relevant pedagogy, Eve explained that by applying for “a couple local grants,” she has made it a personal goal to “have more multicultural content...in my classroom as an ongoing thing and not just this year.”

Crosswalk and Ranking System

To determine the extent that the self-identified practices and perceptions of teachers, and the viewpoints of students, align with culturally relevant pedagogy research, the researcher used a ranking system to share with Cooper County School District. The ranking system, located in Table 3.6, was based on the work of Brown et al. (2020). The rankings range from “Little Evidence” that a small amount of a criterion is apparent to “Strong Evidence” that a criterion is obviously identifiable throughout the teachers’ account of their practices. The criterion assessed was made up of three main components of culturally relevant pedagogy: academic achievement, cultural competency, and socio-political consciousness. The literature review has discussed what these components look like when incorporated into a teacher’s practices. This information was juxtaposed with the responses shared by the teachers and students.

Ranking Justification and Discussion

To arrive at the specific rankings, the researcher referenced Table 3.5, Framework and Data Collection Alignment, to identify areas of data collection that pertained to each component of culturally relevant pedagogy. For each of the questionnaires that were used, the researcher documented the response option with the highest number of responses for the questions pertaining to each of the propositions. An average of these highest responses was then calculated to assign a value to teacher responses, whole group student responses, Black student subgroup responses, and Hispanic student subgroup responses. To be able to reference interview data, the researcher referenced Table 3.5 to identify which interview question aligned with each topic being discussed. The researcher then used this data to determine the extent of evidence that was present. Table 4.21 provides a crosswalk to detail the rankings for CCSD.

Academic Achievement

The proposition of Academic Achievement was broken down into three distinct categories. These categories were based on Table 2.6 that discussed the alignment between the work of Gay and Ladson-Billings. The researcher looked at the responses to the two questionnaires, as well as the teacher interviews, to come up with supporting evidence to provide justification for the ranking given each section.

The first subsection of Academic Achievement, *The potential exists for academic achievement to be achieved across multiple subject areas*, received a ranking of “Evidence.” Based on this ranking, the researcher was able to find some degree of supporting evidence that the teachers are engaging in this approach. In looking at the questionnaire data for questions that aligned with this subsection, the teachers’ average response was a 3.9. This means that they feel strongly about their ability to provide an environment that promotes academic achievement.

Table 4.21

CCSD Rankings

Theme	What the major research says	Teachers' Perceptions	Students' Perceptions	Ranking
Academic Achievement	The potential exists for academic achievement to be achieved across multiple subject areas	Teachers feel strongly about their ability to provide an environment that promotes academic achievement. Evidence is shown in both questionnaire and interviews of challenging students and helping them grow	Students did not feel strongly about teachers providing an environment that promotes academic achievement. Questionnaire responses say this happens "sometimes"	E
	Teachers should maintain high expectations for all students	Teachers perceive that they almost "always" maintain high expectations for all students. This sentiment was shared in the questionnaire and interviews	Students perceptions are that their teachers maintain high expectations only "sometimes"	E
	Teachers should incorporate strategies that align with students' cultural knowledge and maintain cultural connections	On the questionnaire, teachers perceive their ability to fall between "sometimes" and "usually." Minimal examples were provided from the interviews that teachers aligned content with students'	All three groups identified that teachers are able to link academic achievement and cultural knowledge only "sometimes"	• LE

Theme	What the major research says	Teachers' Perceptions	Students' Perceptions	Ranking
		cultural knowledge		
Cultural Competence	Recognize and validate students' culture in the classroom environment to foster student engagement	Teachers' response to the questionnaire yielded lower averages in this category. The teachers responded slightly above "sometimes." Interviews showed minimal reference to culture or cultural competence being used to foster engagement	Students' responses were also lower than other subsections. Student averages fell below "sometimes" in the "rarely" range.	LE
	Teachers use students' culture to tap into funds of knowledge to make the classroom less alienating and to acknowledge students' strengths	Teachers' responses to the questionnaire were lower than any other category. Averages were only slightly above "sometimes." During interviews several instances of funds of knowledge to help students grow were identified	All three groups had averages above "sometimes"	E

Theme	What the major research says	Teachers' Perceptions	Students' Perceptions	Ranking
Sociopolitical Consciousness	Culturally relevant pedagogy should provide an opportunity for students to be freed from oppressive education practices and structures	During the data collection process there was not enough discussion about helping students overcome oppressive structures and practices	Not identified	LE
	Teachers must maintain an understanding and knowledge of oppressive structures and practices	Limited discussion occurred to provide supporting evidence that teachers were able to acknowledge and understand oppressive structures and practices	Not identified	LE
	Teachers use the classroom as a site to create and maintain social change	Over half of the teachers who participated in the interviews identified their classroom as a site to create social change	Students' response to the questionnaire stated that "sometimes" or "usually" they have classes that allow work geared towards social change	E

A 3.9 average would be equivalent to a response of just under "usually." For the same questions, the student groups' average scores were: whole group, 3.2; Black student subgroup, 3.3; and Hispanic student subgroup, 3.2. All three averages rate slightly above the "sometimes" option. During the interviews, teachers spoke about challenging their students and helping them grow as students, thinkers, and citizens. From looking at the student questionnaire response averages, it is

apparent the students did not hold quite the same views as the teachers did. Because of these discrepancies, while evidence of academic achievement exists it is not fully developed.

The second subsection of Academic Achievement is, *Teachers should maintain high expectations for all students*. This section, similar to previous section, also received a ranking of “Evidence.” Through data analysis, the researcher was able to ascertain that there was some supporting evidence that teachers in CCSD maintained high expectations for their students. Data from the related questions on the teacher questionnaire showed that the teachers had an average response of 4.6. This response average is saying that the teachers perceive that they almost “always” maintain high expectations for all of their students. The findings from the interviews were similar to those of the teacher questionnaire. The teachers shared about having high expectations for their students and creating an environment that will allow for success. Despite the perception that high expectations exist, the student responses to the questionnaire deviate from what the teachers had said. The student averages for these same questions were quite a bit lower than what the teachers reported. The student groups’ averages were as follows: whole student group, 3; Black student group, 3.5; Hispanic student group, 3. With such a large gap between the two groups it cannot be stated that the section is fully developed.

The third subsection of Academic Achievement states that, *Teachers should incorporate strategies that align with students’ cultural knowledge and maintain cultural connections*. For this section, a ranking of “Little Evidence” was assigned. Throughout the data analysis, the researcher was only able to determine that limited supporting evidence was provided to link academic achievement and cultural knowledge. The data collected from the teacher questionnaires shows the teachers average response was 3.6 for the questions that related to this subsection. On the student questionnaires, all three student groups averaged 3.0 for the questions

related to the topic. When looking at the interview responses, the teachers did share some specific instructional or classroom strategies that align with students' cultural knowledge. However, for the examples provided, the cultural knowledge was more relevant for the teacher's White identifying students. The lower response averages on the questionnaires, along with minimal examples from the interviews, result in the little evidence ranking.

Cultural Competence

The proposition of Cultural Competence was broken down into two separate categories. These categories were based on the alignment between the work of Gay and Ladson-Billings identified in Table 2.6. To identify supporting evidence and to provide justification for each ranking, the researcher looked at the responses to the two questionnaires, as well as the teacher interviews.

The first subsection of Cultural Competence is *Recognize and validate students' culture in the classroom environment to foster student engagement*. This section received a ranking of "Little Evidence." During the data analysis it was determined that only small amounts of supporting evidence was identified. The responses to the questionnaires yielded lower averages than what was seen on any of the other categories analyzed. The average value for the teacher questionnaire was 3.6, which was the second lowest value identified during data analysis. The averages for the student groups were also lower than other subsections. The averages for the student sections were: whole group, 2.3; Black student subgroup, 3; Hispanic student subgroup, 2.7. During the interviews there were instances where student culture was validated, however, there was minimal reference to culture or cultural components being used to foster engagement. The lower averages on both questionnaires and the limited discussion during the interviews justify the assigned ranking.

The second subsection of Cultural Competence is *Teachers use students' culture to tap into funds of knowledge to make the classroom less alienating and to acknowledge students' strengths*. This section received a ranking of "Evidence." Based on responses to the teacher questionnaires and the conversations during the interviews, the researcher identified that criteria related to the category was ascertained to some degree throughout teachers' responses and students' responses. On the teacher questionnaire, the response average was only a 3.5, which was actually the lowest of any of the categories calculated. Despite this low average, the student responses had a higher average than any of the other categories. The averages for the student groups were: whole group, 3.25; Black student subgroup, 3.5; Hispanic student subgroup, 3.25. Therefore, while the teacher average was only a high "sometime," all three responses from the student groups were above "sometimes." Also, to accompany the teacher questionnaire responses, there were several instances during the interviews where teachers acknowledged using students' funds of knowledge to help the students grow. The responses during the interviews along with the student questionnaire responses justified that students' funds of knowledge were being used to help students succeed in the classroom.

Sociopolitical Consciousness

The third proposition of culturally relevant pedagogy, Sociopolitical Consciousness, was split up into three categories. These categories were based on the alignment between the work of Gay and Ladson-Billings. The subsections used by the researcher were identified in Table 2.6. To identify supporting evidence and to provide justification for each ranking, the researcher looked at the responses to the two questionnaires, as well as the teacher interviews.

The first subsection states that *Culturally relevant pedagogy should provide an opportunity for students to be freed from oppressive education practices and structures*. This

section received a ranking of “Little Evidence.” Through the data analysis the researcher identified that evidence supporting this section was extremely limited. As cited in Chapter 2, both Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (2009) stressed the importance that the growth occurring in the classroom should foster the potential for societal transformation. Teachers should be aware of the various practices and structures currently oppressing students, families, and communities, and they should create opportunities for students to overcome these practices (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Enough teachers did not discuss sentiment related to these areas during the data collection process to justify a higher ranking.

The second subsection of Sociopolitical Consciousness states that *Teachers must maintain an understanding and knowledge of oppressive structures and practices*. The ranking for this section was “Little Evidence.” Based on the teacher interviews, only small amounts of evidence were identified that relate to this section. Some discussion took place during the interviews that allowed teachers to share their understanding of oppressive structures impacting their students. For example, the conversation with Scott about student access to the AIG program showed an understanding of disproportionate numbers of students participating in advanced programs. Another example was seen during the conversation with Kevin about his inability to pursue activities related to social change. Other than these two examples, the discussion was mainly focused on disrupting whitewashed resources and identifying ways to provide diverse perspectives.

The third subsection of Sociopolitical Consciousness is *Teachers use the classroom as a site to create and maintain social change*. This section received a ranking of “Evidence.” Based on the data collected and analyzed, the researcher was able to identify that teachers and students recognize the possibility for the classroom to serve as a site for social change to take place.

During the interviews, seven (58%) teachers identified their classroom as a site to create social change. These seven gave varying responses to why they believe this. Only three (25%) teachers said they did not feel their classrooms allowed for social change. The student questionnaire provided an opportunity to allow students to share their perceptions related to this topic. The data analyzed for the whole group showed that 30.2% of the students responded “Sometimes” they have classes that allow them to engage in work that will bring on social change. When the subgroups were analyzed, the Black subgroup had an equal number (31.25%) of responses for “Sometimes” and “Usually.” The Hispanic subgroup had the highest percentage (34.7%) of responses for “Usually.”

Conclusion

This chapter presented the data that was collected and analyzed during this study. The researcher began the chapter by introducing Cooper County School District. This introduction, for context purposes, provided an overview of what has been going on in Cooper County School District over the past five years. The case study started with a five-year data analysis for 11 of CCSD’s schools and then introduced the work that CCSD has been doing in regards to equity. Following the case study the researcher presented the data that had been collected during the research. Presentation and analysis took place for the teacher questionnaire data, the teacher interview data, and the student questionnaire secondary data. After the data had been presented, the researcher used a crosswalk/ranking system to assign a value to the extent to which evidence shows that teachers in Cooper County School District are participating in culturally relevant pedagogy.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, will build on the data that was collected and discussed in this chapter. In Chapter 5, the researcher will analyze the study’s findings against the

theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The researcher will use the CRT framework to explain how the four identified tenets of CRT are or are not present in the collected data.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY THROUGH A CRITICAL RACE LENS

Introduction

Chapter 4 focused on the collection and presentation of the data for this study. The chapter began with a case study of Cooper County School District to provide context to the research being conducted. The case study included a five-year analysis of 11 of the schools in CCSD. The five-year analysis included end-of-grade test data, participation in advanced courses, and student discipline data. The case study also explored some of the steps CCSD has taken in regards to equity and culturally relevant pedagogy over the past several years. Following the case study, the researcher discussed the data that had been collected to explore teachers' perceptions of their use of culturally relevant practices. The data collection tools included a teacher questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and a student questionnaire. In closing, the researcher provided a ranking for each component of culturally relevant pedagogy based on a comparison of research, teacher perceptions, and student perceptions.

During Chapter 2, the researcher discussed the importance of centering race when focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy. The theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) was also introduced and the researcher spoke about the five main tenets and the use of four of the tenets for this analysis. During this chapter, the researcher will explore the data collected through a critical race lens. Before analyzing the data, the researcher will revisit some important information that was previously presented. To begin, the researcher will revisit student and teacher demographics for Cooper County School District. This will transition into a

discussion about the importance for teachers to pay attention to race when implementing culturally relevant practices. The discussion will then transition to race and explore the historical implications of race and how students of color have been impacted over time. The chapter will then conclude with an analysis of the data collected by the researcher through a CRT lens.

Revisit Cooper County School District

Student Demographics Past and Present

Before discussing the data findings through a CRT lens, it is important to revisit the student and teacher demographics for Cooper County School District for context. During the first year of the five-year data analysis, 2014-2015, there were a total of 8,388 students enrolled in the district. Student demographic data for CCSD shows that a majority of these students identified as White (52%). The second largest student group during the 2014-2015 school year was the Hispanic student group (30%). Black students represented the third highest group with a total of 12% of the student population. District data also shows that 1% of the student population identified as being Asian.

Student demographic data for Cooper County School District for the 2018-2019 school year varied slightly from the first year of the study. As was previously reported in Chapter 4, the majority of the student population from the 2018-2019 school year identified as White (51%). Data presented from the CCSD case study includes Hispanic students (32%) as the second most populated student group within the district. Black students, represented with 11% of the total student population, were the third highest group. This data shows that over the five years of data that were collected in this study the White student population and the Black student population decreased by 1% and the Hispanic student population increased by 2%.

Teacher Demographics and Why They are Important

As was presented in the CCSD case study in Chapter 4, district data pertaining to teacher demographics showed that the majority of teachers identify as White (83%). Only 8% of the total teacher population within Cooper County School District identify as Black. According to the district data, 9% of teachers fall into other racial classifications not including White or Black.

Revisiting the teacher demographics is important prior to the analysis of culturally relevant pedagogy through a CRT lens. As was mentioned previously, when using CRT, race and racism must remain the focus of the work (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner, 2017). When race is centered, the various human components and systemic forms of racism can be uncovered and interpreted to provide a more equitable learning experience. As Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) discussed, too often the visual component of race shapes the view that a teacher has of his/her students. By ignoring race, a teacher may hide behind the veil of culture and not be challenged to recognize his/her own biases. This is especially important in a district with such a large percentage of the teaching population identifying as White.

Arriving at Race

Before beginning the discussion involving CRT, it is significant to revisit the topic of race. During this section, the researcher will identify the formation of race and how it works to separate certain groups of people. The researcher will then define racialization and explain how this practice leads to practices of racism. To conclude this section, the researcher will briefly talk about the impact that race and racialization has had on students of color and continues to have.

Formation of Race Revisited

Chapter 2 explained how race as a concept is a modern era creation that is used to formulate distinctions between individuals. Frequently, these distinctions are made in an effort to

benefit a certain group while other groups consequently suffer (Milner, 2017; Nakkula & Toshalis, 2006). As Milner (2017) pointed out, race in the United States has been defined or viewed in many different ways. For over two centuries, racist discourse in the Western hemisphere has tied the construction of race and, more importantly, intellectual perspicacity to different racial groups. From phrenology to eugenics, countless studies have attempted to show the hierarchy of race, ethnicity, and intelligence (Howard, 2020).

In citing research, Howard (2020) pointed out that despite the multitude of constructs surrounding it, race has “always played a critical role in the evolution and advancement of democracy in the United States” (p. 91). Key to this evolution and advancement is the racialization of certain groups and expansion of racist ideologies.

Racialization

Racialization involves the placement of people into racial categories based on certain characteristics. Bonilla-Silva (1997) pointed out that some form of hierarchy is present in all racialized social systems. The race that is placed in a more superior position is likely to receive greater access to certain forms of capital. As a result of this accumulation of capital, the group in a superior position is typically viewed as more favorable and smarter.

In the United States, racialization has occurred throughout history mainly targeting non-White groups. This understanding is important when thinking about the broader scope of racism in the United States. As Chapter 2 discussed, the idea of racism does not need to rest within the good/bad binary. Instead, understanding the structural characteristics of racism is essential in recognizing the broader impact it can have. According to Solorzano, Allen, and Carrol (2002), racism has three important characteristics. For racism to exist, there must be a belief that one group is superior to others. The group that is believed to be superior must have the ability to

execute racist acts. Lastly, the racist acts being carried out must have the ability to affect multiple racial and ethnic groups. These characteristics of racism are important when focusing on the impact that race, racialization, and racism have had on students of color.

Impact on Students of Color

When thinking about the role that race and racism have played for students of color in the United States, it is important to move away from the traditional model that limits race relations in terms of Black and White experiences (Yosso, 2005). By using Marable's definition of racism, the focus shifts to examining racism and how it intersects with other methods of subordination, something CRT has benefitted from over the years (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993). Marable (1992) defined racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation and power used to oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5). This definition allows for greater understanding of how structural inequities have harmed various students of color during history.

Throughout history, students of color have been adversely affected by the structural implications of racism. As Chapter 1 pointed out, longstanding practices and events throughout history have created educational inequalities for students of color. For Black students, these inequalities date back to the times of enslavement when educating Blacks was illegal. Following the abolition of slavery, for over 100 years, various forms of discrimination during the Jim Crow era prevented Blacks from having access to the same educational resources and opportunities as their White counterparts (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

In addition to the educational inequities that faced Black students, Latino students also faced discriminatory practices that denied them educational opportunities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Chapter 1 mentioned two major legal proceedings, *Mendez v. Westminster* and the

Lemon Grove Incident, that prevented Hispanic students from accessing an equitable, high-quality education. Details from both of these incidents show how the California education system kept Mexican children segregated from White students and forced them to attend schools with inadequate resources.

The table (1.1) and figures (1.1, 1.2, and 1.3) provided in Chapter 1 provide statistical evidence of the lasting impact these forms of discrimination have had on students of color in the United States. The gaps that are identified are not the cause of lack of effort or achievement, but based on almost two centuries of discriminatory educational practices. In addition to what was presented in Chapter 1, Table 2.12 highlighted current educational inequities that are facing Black and Brown students.

In recent years, issues pertaining to anti-Blackness, xenophobia, and anti-immigration sentiment have created additional forms of discrimination for students of color (Howard, 2020). It is clear that in America, society has not moved on from the issue of race. Despite belief by some that our nation has moved into a period of post-racialism, racial issues and overt and covert forms of racism continue to exist (Cho, 2009; Parsons & Turner, 2014). With that being said, it remains critical for race to be recognized and addressed when working with today's students of color.

Data Analysis through a Critical Race Theory Lens

Howard (2020) explained that despite the decrease over time of racism and discrimination, important work still must be done to improve conditions and opportunities in schools for students of color. He continued to state that, “the inclusion of a critical race framework in education is essential when one considers the perennial underachievement of African American, Latinx, Native American, and certain Asian American students in U.S.

schools” (Howard, 2020, p. 98). When discussing CRT it is also important to understand the increasing criticism the framework has received in recent years. This criticism has come from elected officials, board of education members, and parents of school-aged students. Many times the criticism is based on inaccurate definitions of CRT and is used as scare tactics. It is vital for those involved in education to understand the importance of CRT. In education, the focus of CRT is not to teach hate to the students, but instead it should be used to reduce the gaps between student subgroups and to disrupt systemic practices that have allowed these gaps to continue to exist.

Condemnation of Critical Race Theory

During the summer of 2020, amidst an increase in conversations about systemic racism in the United States, CRT gained a tremendous amount of popularity and ire from the American public. Many citizens were unfamiliar with the framework prior to it being mentioned by former President of the United States, Donald J. Trump. Trump warned American federal agencies against CRT and condemned use of the framework for any in-house training due to its divisiveness (Fortin, 2021). President Trump would go on to issue an executive order that barred any training that made suggestions that the United States was fundamentally racist (Fortin, 2021).

Following Trump’s executive order, the use of the term CRT among non-academics increased substantially. Despite the increased popularity of the term, most usage did not fit the academic definition. Critics of CRT commonly use the term to label a wide-range of activities ranging from teaching about historical racism in schools to workplace diversity trainings (Fortin, 2021). In an attempt to discredit the framework, many Republicans simply summarize CRT as “all race and gender-based equity work in public schools (King, 2021).

As was previously mentioned, CRT has not only been a political talking point at a national level over the past few years, but it has also been the focal point of many policies at the local level. As a result of the misinterpretation of CRT, there has been a drastic increase in the number of school board fights and legislative proposals in many states in an effort to ban CRT from being taught or discussed in schools or higher education (Florida Governor, 2021; King, 2021; Zanona, 2021). In Florida, for example, current Governor DeSantis has been cited as describing CRT as “state-sanction racism” that teaches the state’s kids to “hate each other” (Florida Governor, 2021). DeSantis’ Commissioner of Education, Richard Corcoran, views CRT as a threat that is attempting to manipulate classroom content in an effort to impose values on students (Florida Governor, 2021). These comments in Florida, and many others nationwide, continue to be made despite no mention of CRT in any state approved curriculum.

Thinking back to the Howard (2020) quote at the beginning of this section, the use of CRT in today’s schools is necessary not to teach the students how to hate, but instead to recognize opportunity gaps and to work towards decreasing disparities in the system. The following section will analyze the data findings from this study through a CRT lens. The researcher will use the four tenets discussed in Chapter 2 (The Permanence of Racism, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism, and Counterstorytelling) to look at the data collected from the teacher questionnaire, teacher interviews, student questionnaire, and five-year data analysis. The analysis will serve as an opportunity to not only recognize where systemic racism may exist, but to also shed light on other areas that may be contributing to the gaps mentioned in Chapter 4.

The Permanence of Racism

The CRT tenet of the permanence racism stresses the belief that racism is permanently ingrained in American life and society. The racism identified does not always have to fall along the good/bad binary. Instead, racism can be structural and can be seen in the racial hierarchies that have been created in America. These hierarchies determine who gets access to certain benefits and resources. In education, the systemic form of racism is frequently seen through the various disproportionalities that are common in schools. This can range from standardized test performance, participation in advanced level classes, and discipline data.

Before even digging into statistical data that was presented in the district case study, the permanence of racism may be seen through the supposed equity efforts made or not made by Cooper County School District. To begin, the district created a new position, the Executive Director for Excellence and Opportunity. According to the original announcement, Cooper County School District claimed that this individual would be responsible for implementing the district's equity agenda and leading the district's equity efforts. Despite such a focus pertaining to equity, the term is not used in the position title. In comparison, three surrounding school districts have district level positions that include the word equity in the title. These include: Chief Equity Officer, Executive Director for Equity Affairs, and Chief Equity and Engagement Officer. While the district's motivation for this position naming is unknown, the word choice is curious. To an individual who is not familiar with the position, a glance at the table of organization for the district may lead them to infer something different about the director's role. This may also allow for interpretation that there are no equitable concerns within the district. Thus maintaining a more pristine image.

Analyzing the equity team's next steps identified a second example of the permanence of racism being seen in Cooper County School District. As was discussed in Chapter 4, the CCSD equity team's primary goals include 1) explore barriers that the district and district's schools have in place that may limit student success, 2) take ownership for the factors that schools can control that create the greatest opportunities for student success, and 3) to foster community partnerships that help engage families and address external barriers to school success. Despite having these goals, the equity team's next steps identified in Appendix G do not have any mention about decreasing performance gaps, increasing participation in AP classes for students of color, or addressing discipline disproportionalities. This is an example of the equity team's goals not aligning with their actions. While the team is able to be successful and claim certain accomplishments related to their equity work, nothing has been noted about the efforts to address the structural hierarchies that exist within the district.

In Cooper County School District examples of the permanence of racism may also be seen through the disproportionalities that were identified in the district case study in Chapter 4. The case study presented a five-year data analysis for 11 schools (three high schools, three middle schools, and five K-8 schools) in CCSD. As discussed in the case study and documented in Appendix D, performance gaps between White students and students of color are prominent across schools and content areas. Despite starting to make efforts pertaining to equity in the school district, widespread improvements in student performance has yet to take place. This is especially concerning considering that one of the areas that CCSD mentioned as part of their school level equity focus (Appendix F) was data analysis by subgroups.

Additional examples of disproportionalities that highlight the permanence of racism can be seen when analyzing placement in advanced courses and student discipline data. As was

discussed in Chapter 1, The College Board data from 2013 highlights the disproportionality between racial groups' participation in Advanced Placement exams. The data in Table 1.1 shows that the breakdown of AP exam test takers included: 55% White identifying, 18.8% Hispanic identifying, 9.2% Black identifying. Cooper County School District data presented in Appendix D shows that for Ashley Lane High School and Knight High School the participation percentages for the Black student population and Hispanic population were well below the national averages for every year during the five-year study. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, Burton High School has a Hispanic student population greater than 50%. For Burton High School there was an increase in Hispanic student participation in AP courses following the 2015-2016 school year. 2015-2016 also represented the one-year that the Black student population participated at a rate higher than the national average (9.82%). However, the years that followed resulted in a Black student participation rate well below the national average. Therefore, despite CCSD's equity focus on having conversations with counselors in an attempt to increasing enrollment (Appendix E), notable disproportionalities still exist.

The discipline data presented in Appendix D and discussed in Chapter 4 is another example of gaps that exist within CCSD along racial lines. During the five-year analysis the researcher showed that gaps were present during all years and did not improve. Outlier data did exist and Chapter 4 discussed the occurrences when the White subgroup may have had higher in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of-school suspension (OSS) incidents than either the Black subgroup or Hispanic subgroup. The data presented also showed that there were some instances where the number of OSS incidents did decrease for students of color over the course of the five years. However, this trend was not consistent across all 11 schools.

Data provided by Cooper County School District showed that the district has made attempts to improve the discipline gaps. As part of CCSD's equity work, specific training and strategies have been identified as ways to decrease discipline disproportionality. Data provided by CCSD also cited that restorative practices training would be provided for all schools. The data did not indicate if any of these efforts have been implemented yet. Similar to the test results and AP participation, the district has begun making steps in the right direction, however, no statistically visible improvement has occurred.

As was previously mentioned, the racism seen in systems of education typically occurs in a covert manner. This allows racial hierarchies to be established and maintained over time. These hierarchies maintain gaps between certain groups and provide inequitable access to certain benefits and resources. As the data discussed above highlights, this form of racism is present in Cooper County School District.

Whiteness as Property

A second tenet of CRT, previously introduced in Chapter 2, is the belief that Whiteness can be considered as a form of property (Harris, 1995). Whiteness as property comes as a result of a long history of racism in the United States and legal understandings that have legitimized the role of race in society (Harris, 1995). In this regard, Whiteness is not viewed as a form of physical property; however, it addresses the property functions associated with Whiteness (Harris, 1995). Researchers have shared that these functions include: the rights of disposition, the rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and one's absolute right to exclude (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Based on the findings from the study, the researcher will address how three of these functions (rights to use and enjoy, reputation and

status property, and absolute right to exclude) parallel certain inequities seen in today's schools and can also be detected in the data collected from Cooper County School District.

Rights to Use and Enjoy

The rights to use and enjoy is another function of whiteness as property. Harris (1995) explained that when an individual possesses property, they also possess the right to use and enjoy the property. Due to its use as a part of identity and as a property interest, Whiteness may be experienced as well as used as a resource (Harris, 1995). Through use and enjoyment, an individual is able to take advantage of the various forms of privilege that accompany Whiteness (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Chapter 2 explained that in an education setting, the social, cultural, and economic privileges that accompany Whiteness may be seen as property through tangible resources available for certain students' use or through the structure of the selected curriculum. The right to use and enjoy may not provide students of color with the same resources and learning opportunities as their White counterparts. The researcher found that this function of Whiteness as property existed in multiple ways.

Whiteness as property's the right to use and enjoy was identified in the responses to the teacher questionnaire. As was previously discussed, a total of 148 teachers responded to the questionnaire. Out of the teachers who responded, 83% identified as White, 7% identified as Hispanic, and 4% identified as Black. While the 83% mirrors the teacher demographics for the entire district, the percent of Black teachers participating was less than district totals. Regardless of how the percentage of Black teachers lines up, the almost 85% of all responses dominates the narrative of the data collected by the researcher. The responses of the White teachers were able to control the data and exhibit the perspectives they wanted to believe.

The right to use and enjoy also shows up in how teachers decide to engage in the equity work that the district is implementing. It has been mentioned multiple times that CCSD and the equity team have made attempts to involve teachers in professional development related to culturally relevant pedagogy and other equity topics. During her interview, Claire commented about how it has been hard for her to implement some of the materials presented in the district's trainings. In Chapter 4, reference was made to Claire's concern about the lack of substance in the trainings. Another concern that Claire shared had to do with finding an ally among colleagues to be able to collaborate with when implementing new practices. Claire claimed that due to her colleagues' homogeneity, it has been difficult to find someone to talk to and to find someone who would be like-minded when engaging in equity work. Claire's example shows how this population of predominantly White teachers has the freedom to choose what is important to them and what they would like to engage in. The teachers may attend the PD sessions, however, if accountability is missing the teachers have the choice to use what they learned or to simply ignore it.

In a way, the example provided above gives the teachers a choice of comfort when it comes to equity work. They are required to attend the professional development, but if implementation does not align with their individual comfort, they may choose not to pursue it. A similar choice of comfort was also seen with the teacher questionnaire results discussed in Chapter 4. As was mentioned, three of the questions had "5" (Always) as the highest response. Each of the three questions could be described as comfort topics or topics that could be interpreted as race-neutral. A teacher could respond to these questions and purposely choose to omit the thought of race from their response. The topics in these questions included: academic success (#13), positive relationships (#14), and creating a community of learners (#15). All three

questions had over 46% of the teachers respond with “5” (Always). These topics are things all teachers would most likely want to do regardless of their concern towards equitable outcomes.

An additional example of the right to use and enjoy can be seen with the school level activities that have been implemented by across the district. Table 4.13 identifies school level culturally relevant practices that have been included in CCSD. Under the topic of School Resources there are two practices that are currently being used in the district. The first practice is to make, “purposeful purchases of diverse materials in media centers.” The second practice is to make, “purposeful purchases of classroom library materials to be more diverse.” The acknowledgement of these practices does not include a definition of what the district’s definition is of “diverse.” The right to use and enjoy would allow the district to make safe choices that would not stir up any controversy in the greater community. It is also worth noting that nothing is said about what school or classroom practices accompany these resources. There is no discussion about if teachers are held accountable to use these resources or if the resources will simply remain in the media center untouched. Without a common focus and discussion regarding race, the goal of narrowing gaps will remain unreached.

In the classroom, the right to use and enjoy can be something as simple as the decoration selected for the walls of the classroom. Ladson-Billings (2009) spoke about the importance for teachers with culturally relevant practices to demonstrate a connectedness with each of their students. Part of this connectedness that Ladson-Billings discussed included classroom décor. She addressed the need for walls to be decorated with cultural heroes and icons and explained that by learning about more than just students’ names and birthdates a teacher would recognize what held value for the students. Gay (2001) addressed this as being part of a symbolic curriculum. Teachers who engage in culturally responsive teaching recognize the power of the

symbolic curriculum and understand the power it has in delivering important messages to their students (Gay, 2001). During the conversations with the teachers from Cooper County School District, the component involving culturally relevant décor was not seen. While most teachers took the opportunity to decorate their classroom walls, many times the materials selected were of their own choosing. By making these selections for classroom decoration, the teachers possessed the right to decide what was important and what should hold value in the classroom. Table 5.1 shares a list of the decorations and artifacts that the teachers discussed in the interviews.

As was mentioned above, the right to use and enjoy may not provide students of color with the same resources and learning opportunities as their White counterparts. During the discussion in Chapter 4, student choice was recognized as a common theme that came up during the interviews. Multiple teachers from CCSD spoke about providing students with choice when completing their assignments. The form of choice varied from the order of completion of assignments to student selection from a menu of tasks to complete. Despite giving students the opportunity to choose, teachers still had the say in what was getting completed and the assignments types of work that was being done. The example provided by Kayla, where she allowed students to select their own mentor text and writing assignment is an occurrence where the right to use and enjoy may shift from the teacher's control depending on the criteria of the entire assignment.

Reputation and Status Property

The function reputation and status property originated from the historical belief that a social hierarchy existed based on race. In this racial hierarchy, White and Whiteness was placed at the top and anything falling below Whiteness was perceived to have less value. In regards to education, any time a school, curriculum, or program is identified as nonwhite it typically carries

Table 5.1*Classroom Décor and Artifacts*

Teacher	Artifacts, Posters, Decorations
Erin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture of the Mona Lisa • Impressionist Art • Images from different countries • Gabriella Garcia Marquez Poster • Picasso pictures • Shakespeare posters • Personal items (Teacher's March, etc.)
Eve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational Posters
Alicia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Positivity posters • All Races, genders, ...are welcome poster
Karen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student artwork • Graphic Organizers • Handwritten posters • Inspirational quotes • Personal artifacts (geodes, etc.)
Scott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magazines • Free Newspapers • Student artwork
Sean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audition materials • Band programs
Kayla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth mindset posters • College themed décor • Instructional materials
Eddie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps • U.S. Constitution • Bill of Rights • World Religions posters
Kevin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue with hanging stuff up due to school building being new
Justin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College themed décor • Artwork • Career path posters • Student work
Jane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm not very decorative. So, my room is pretty institutional."
Claire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art History posters (diverse perspectives stressed) • Students' Artwork • Teacher's Artwork (over time) • Miscellaneous objects

with it a diminished reputation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In Cooper County School District, this form of Whiteness as property was identified in multiple forms.

One example of reputation and status property is seen in the district with the isolated celebrations discussed during Chapter 4. During the interviews multiple teachers spoke about their schools and their colleagues' level of comfort with only celebrating diverse groups during specific months like Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month. By only celebrating non-White cultures during a certain time of the year the racial hierarchy is reinforced and Whiteness is seen as being normal and having a better reputation. These systemic barriers also ignore students' of color background and greater contributions to the class conversation. For one month they may be viewed as the class expert on a topic, but for the remainder of the year the cultural capital they possess goes unnoticed.

During the study, the researcher was able to identify that within CCSD certain schools have higher status than others. The reputation and status was not communicated to the researcher from the district and the district maintained that funding was comparable between schools. However, based on conversations with the teachers a perceived status difference was notable. The schools that teachers felt were acknowledged for having a better reputation also happened to have a higher percentage of White students enrolled in the school. Kevin spoke about his current school and identified the difference in available supplies compared to his previous school. Kevin explained that he is currently teaching at a school located on the side of the district with a higher income level and with a majority White population. The available resources are staggering and have been an "eye opening" experience for Kevin. If he runs out of supplies he has been fortunate that the school will resupply his room. Kevin's previous school was located on the other side of the county and had a majority Hispanic population. Kevin detailed how he "was

funding over \$2,000” a year “just to get that program going.” Kevin’s perception of the status differences between the two schools highlights how reputation and status has the ability to provide or deny certain resources.

The Absolute Right to Exclude

CRT researchers have pointed out that in addition to being able to use and enjoy certain privileges, Whiteness as property also provides the right to exclude others from enjoying these same privileges (Harris, 1995). The absolute right to exclude is seen in a number of ways within the education system. Students of color may be excluded from the same opportunities as other students and may also experience overrepresentation in special education programs, and disproportionate disciplinary practices.

In Cooper County School District, the absolute right to exclude is exemplified through the data collected for the five-year analysis. The data that was discussed under the permanence of racism section is applicable when identifying various ways that students of color have been excluded from the same opportunities as their White counterparts. Specifically, the five-year data shows that students of color are not well represented in advanced level courses. Chapter 4 identified how for Ashley Lane High School and Knight High School the percentages of Black students and Hispanic students participating in AP classes is not proportionate to their percentages of the school population and is much lower than the White student subgroup. At Burton High School, despite making up over 60% of the student population, the Hispanic student subgroup of AP test takers never went above 55% during the five years analyzed.

Another example of the absolute right to exclude is seen not with the data presented, but instead with the data that is left out. Chapter 4 acknowledged that not all data that may have been collected was necessarily reported. During the discussion about test performance it was noted

that missing data did not necessarily mean that there were not students of that subgroup testing for a given year. Instead, the absence of data in most instances is related to the number of students being too few to qualify as a separate subgroup. By hiding students, in this case students of color, behind an asterisk the district is showcasing their ability to exclude or hide certain students. Regardless of the group's performance, the asterisk represents the district's ability to exercise their right to exclude a group of students. It is worth noting that these may not be decisions of the district, but may be common reporting practices mandated by the state. Nonetheless, the individual district must make sure they are not forgetting about these individual students when determining the entire district's performance.

The discussion of the subgroup clusters (Tables 4.15, 4.16, & 4.17) provides another example of the absolute right to exclude. For the Black subgroup, three of the six questions (#1, #2, & #5) in Table 4.16 have a combined response of almost 44% of the Black students. This shows that close to half of the students responding answered with a "1" (Never) or a "2" (Rarely). The topics for each of these questions (#1 Get to know families and backgrounds, #2 Surveys regarding classroom preferences, #5 Learn about culture outside of class) all pertain to topics a student would be able to respond to based on their personal experience. A similar trend was identified for the Hispanic subgroup. There were three questions (#1, #5, & #8) where the "1"/"2" clusters accounted for over 40% of the question's responses. For the Hispanic subgroup, the "1"/"2" cluster for question #5 had a total of 58% of the total responses. This question, which was also identified by the Black subgroup, asked about teachers spending time outside of class to learn about students' culture. When these questions are compared to the teachers' responses, the discrepancy in responses is apparent. For question #1 (Get to know families and backgrounds), 87% of the teachers responded with "4" (Usually) or "5" (Always). For each of the other three

questions discussed, over 48% of the teachers responded with either a “3” (Sometimes) or “4” (Usually). Question #2, which asked about student surveys, was the only question with a combined total below 50%. Without the balance of the student questionnaire, the students of the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup would be excluded from sharing their perceptions.

The absolute right to exclude is also recognized through the discipline disproportionalities identified in the case study in Chapter 4. Like access to advanced courses, the data related to discipline in CCSD was also discussed under the permanence of racism category. The discipline data presented in the five-year data analysis shows gaps exist along racial lines. Despite making up less than 50% of the student population at most of CCSD schools, Black and Hispanic students have much higher rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension than the district’s White students. This continued overrepresentation in these discipline categories shows that students of color are being excluded from certain opportunities while White students are not.

Another example of the absolute right to exclude came up during the interview discussions with Scott and Eve. Eve spoke about providing academically rigorous work for students who were not identified as AIG because she felt that they deserved this opportunity as well. This comment makes it sound as if the AIG identification process is quite selective and may be excluding certain students from these accommodations. Scott, who currently teaches AIG classes, added to what Eve had to say as he discussed why he favors pushing into some classrooms for AIG instruction:

I know that there are some students who are in AIG, maybe not because they are technically or officially academically or intellectually gifted, but they’re really good at playing school. That they were like the model student. So, all along, teachers were like,

‘oh yeah, you’re a great student, you’re probably AIG.’ So that’s why I like to go into classrooms to just do activities for the whole group because there’s a growing philosophy in AIG that it’s not something that you are and you’re like that forever. It might be something that depends on what you’re talking about or thinking about is whether you have giftedness.

Scott’s comments suggest that while certain students may be getting a gratuitous placement into AIG programs, there are other students who are being excluded from enjoying the same privileges.

During the interviews, Scott provided a second example of how certain students have been excluded from enjoying certain privileges within the district. Scott detailed a new learning activity that the school recently started. The activity is designed to take place on a specific day during the week and is an opportunity for all students to receive enrichment activities. Scott shared that the decision to make this change came about because there “was a fear that some students” were missing out on the designated enrichment time because they were always sent to remediation. While it sounds like Scott’s school is making a move in the right direction and looking for ways to include all students, it cannot be ignored that the systemic punishment that was the previous norm provides a perfect example of exclusion from enjoyment of a fun activity.

Critique of Liberalism

The critique of liberalism is another tenet of CRT. This tenet originated from scholars finding fault with liberalism’s less-aggressive approach for solving race-based problems. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, CRT scholars believe that if the efforts to make change are not aggressive and color-conscious, the desired results will not become reality. The Liberal approach, on the other hand, has a tendency to not focus on individual’s histories or current

situations. Instead, liberals strongly believe in equality and equal treatment for everyone. One of the components that fall under the critique of liberalism is CRT's need to expose colorblindness. In an education setting, exposing colorblindness includes not only identifying where it exists, but also by exploring how its existence can be detrimental to students of color and how it can maintain race-based gaps seen in schools.

Colorblindness

Colorblindness is the idea that one does not or should not recognize color of skin or other racial differences. When viewed through a CRT lens, this belief of equality is questioned because it does not take into consideration the permanence of racism nor the structure that has classified people of color as others (Decuir & Dixon, 2004). This view makes it almost impossible to scrutinize how White privilege is established and how Whiteness has been normalized (Williams, 1997). In the classroom, those practicing colorblindness make attempts to avoid diversity in an effort to replace it with homogeneity (Ladson-Billings, 1998). By not acknowledging race, an educator is essentially ignoring the lived experiences that a student brings with them to the classroom (Kohli et al., 2017). Educators in these settings typically believe that all students learn the same way and that it is up to the student to put in the effort for success. While the teachers in CCSD did make numerous comments about learning who their students were, the researcher did identify examples of colorblindness when completing the study.

During the data collection, the researcher did not encounter any teacher's comments that lacked recognition of the racial diversity within the classroom. The teachers that the researcher spoke with during the interviews acknowledged the breadth of racial diversity within their schools or the lack thereof. One area of colorblindness that the researcher noticed was the teachers' inability to capitalize on students' culture-race. Chapter 2 explained that culture-race

includes multiple aspects of culture and makes connections to the greater community that students come from. These components of culture-race may include certain artistic traditions or the various forms of interaction within cultural institutions (i.e. churches, places of business, homes, etc.) (Gotanda, 1991). During the interviews many teachers spoke about acknowledging their students, providing “choice” for assignments, and providing resources from diverse perspectives. However, by ignoring culture-race funds of knowledge, teachers are missing out on a key opportunity and key resources that could be implemented to strengthen teaching practices and classroom interactions. It is also worth noting that on the teacher questionnaire question asking about the use of surveys to learn about students’ preferences, 30% of the responses selected either a “1” (Never) or “2” (Rarely). By ignoring an opportunity like this to learn about the students in the classroom, the teacher is erasing the individuality of the students in the classroom and attempting to teach everyone the way they perceive to be best.

A second instance of colorblindness was recognized when the activities included under the district level equity focus (Appendix E) were analyzed. Appendix E includes a bulleted list of activities recognized by the district as part of their equity initiative. In this list, the phrase “diverse” or “diversity” is used eight times to describe teachers, staff, students, and resources. Appendix E does not provide a definition as to what the term “diverse” means in all of these items. Instead, interpretation is left up to the reader. This avoidance of a clear definition is an example of colorblindness, which normalizes Whiteness.

In addition to the vagueness surrounding the use of the term “diverse,” Appendix E also has multiple items that reference activities or actions to benefit “all students.” Whether it is pertaining to access to advanced courses, overall student success, or access to certain resources, many individuals in the district may already believe that all students are getting access. With the

majority of teachers and students in the district being White, the common belief may be one of choice. Interpretation could be that certain students choose to be successful and access higher level courses and others do not. This belief does not take the racial component into consideration. When the district uses the phrase “all students,” the reality that students of color are getting ignored is clouded through a colorblind lens.

Counterstorytelling

The tenet of counterstorytelling is necessary to be able to have multiple perspectives validated and accepted. When narratives from subordinated groups are allowed, a new reality is created. By sharing the counterstory, an opportunity is created for students to share their story and to recognize that it is valued. Counterstorytelling is not creating a platform for students of color to complain, but instead it allows for their reality to be recognized and understood.

The importance of recognizing the counterstory is evident in the research collected for this study. The majority of data collection tools (teacher questionnaire, teacher interviews, and data analysis) did not allow the voice of the students to be incorporated. By including the student questionnaires, the students’ voice was allowed to share a perspective that would have otherwise been ignored. When the teacher questionnaires were compared to the student questionnaires it was noted that discrepancies existed. Without the student version, the teachers’ responses would have maintained the hierarchy of whose voice has value.

One example of how the counterstory painted a clearer picture can be seen with questionnaire question #2. This question asks about the use of surveys to find out about classroom preferences. The survey, as a tool in this capacity, could provide teachers with a perfect opportunity to become more culturally inclusive when it comes to instructional practices and other classroom strategies. Out of the 147 teachers who responded to this question, 25.9%

said that they “sometimes” use surveys to this capacity. While this primary response may align with what the students also said, 21.8% said they “usually” use surveys and 20.4% said they “always” use surveys. Without looking at students’ responses one would infer that teachers in CCSD are using surveys for students’ classroom preferences at a very high rate. When the counterstory is introduced, it can be seen that 26.4% of the students said that their teachers “rarely” use surveys and 16.6% said their teachers “never” use surveys. While the teacher responses tend to favor the higher end of the response spectrum, the student responses may be analyzed to gain a better understanding of what may be going on.

The student questionnaire responses also highlight the importance of not grouping all students of color together. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the experiences that different racial groups have should be acknowledged in the classroom. By grouping all students of color together and assuming like experiences for all, the students’ narratives are being silenced. One example of this is seen with questionnaire question #7. This item stated that teachers ask students for input when planning lessons and activities. As a whole, the student response was “sometimes.” The Black student subgroup and the Hispanic student subgroup both selected “sometimes” as the option with the most responses. When the subgroups’ secondary responses were analyzed it showed that the Black student subgroup selected “never” as the second most popular option. For the Hispanic subgroup, “usually” was selected as the second most popular option. This example of discrepancy between groups of students of color further highlights the use of counterstorytelling.

The use of the counterstory does not always have to uncover disparities of opinion. Sometimes it may be used as a way to validate the positive things that are occurring. Multiple questions on the questionnaire or topics in the interviews showed instances where the student and

teacher perceptions aligned. This could be seen with questions dealing with diverse perspectives, or students seeing themselves in the curriculum, and working towards social change. By including the students' opinion on these topics a better understanding was provided for the district and the students were able to respond to topics that others could not have accurately responded to for them.

During the teacher interviews, the researcher identified that some of the teachers who participated are providing an opportunity for their students' voices to be present. As was discussed in Chapter 4, Kevin and Erin shared how they incorporate their students' funds of knowledge into their planning to make the students feel empowered and to make the classroom more inclusive. Alicia also provided an example how she moves away from being the keeper of knowledge and lets her students voice and stories lead the instruction. Recognizing that her background in Latin music and rhythms is limited, Alicia allows her students to share their culture and their expertise to bring the lesson to life. What takes place in these classrooms is more than students simply sharing their "interests," but by having an opportunity to share who they are and what their culture is, they are being validated.

Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher conducted an analysis of the data collected during the study through a CRT lens. Before beginning the analysis the researcher revisited the student and teacher demographics of Cooper County School District. The researcher also discussed the formation of race and racialization, and highlighted the longstanding impact that these constructs have had on students of color. From there, the researcher moved into the data analysis using CRT as a framework. The researcher used four of the five tenets of CRT (the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, critique of liberalism, and counterstorytelling) to explore the data that had

been collected. By looking at the five-year data analysis, teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews, and student questionnaires through a CRT lens the researcher was able to discuss various forms of systemic oppression currently impacting CCSD's students of color.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, will provide conclusion to this research. The chapter will revisit and answer the study's research question and three sub research questions. Chapter 6 will also focus on the research as a whole and discuss how this study fits into and contributes to the larger body of literature. The chapter will conclude by making suggestions for practitioners and education leaders, and recommendations for improving future study.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

During this study, the researcher used exploratory research to take a precursory look at culturally relevant practices within a suburban/rural school district. The study looked at what extent middle and high school teachers in Cooper County School District perceived they are incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy in their daily practices. Several forms of data were collected and analyzed to address the research question and sub research questions and to explore what might be taking place within the district in regards to culturally relevant pedagogy. A 15-item questionnaire, as well as semi-structured interviews, was used to identify teachers' perceived practices and approaches. The district gathered student perceptions of teachers' practices through a 13-item student questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire was provided to the researcher for analysis. School-based student performance data from a five-year range was analyzed to identify any relationships and/or disparities in subgroup scores and any possible trends over time. In addition, the review of literature and empirical research regarding culturally relevant pedagogy was compared to the practices currently being identified by teachers within the district.

In this chapter, the researcher will revisit the research question and the three sub research questions and answer each of them. The discussion will then transition to focus on the research as a whole and implications moving forward. The researcher will explore how the research conducted in this study fits in and contributes to the larger body of literature. The final two sections of this chapter will provide suggestions for practitioners, school leaders, and school

districts, and will then conclude with recommendations that will provide assistance to future study.

Responses to Research Questions

Research Question: Are the middle school and high school teachers in Cooper County School District incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom practices? If so, which ones and how?

After collecting and analyzing data from teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews, and student questionnaires, and then evaluating the data against reviewed literature, the researcher believes that the teachers in Cooper County School District are incorporating components of culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom practices. It goes without saying that some teachers are incorporating more components in their classrooms than other teachers and it could also be said that some teachers may not be incorporating any of the components. The researcher does recognize that some culturally relevant practices are being incorporated that relate to academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the researcher found evidence that the teachers in CCSD showed evidence of classroom practices aligned with the culturally relevant component of academic achievement. Specifically, as outlined in the crosswalk and ranking system, teachers were providing opportunities for academic success to be achieved across multiple areas. The research also identified that teachers typically maintained high expectations for all of their students. Despite strengths in these two areas, the research noticed that the teachers needed to improve their strategies that align with cultural knowledge of their students and find ways to maintain cultural connections between their students and classroom practices and materials.

In addition to practices related to academic achievement, the researcher also recognized some practices and approaches that show evidence that cultural competence is also present. Specifically, the researcher noticed that teachers' ability to tap into students' funds of knowledge to acknowledge strengths was being done by multiple teachers. There was no one single approach being taken by the teachers, however, the identified practices moved beyond a deficit approach and looked to build off student knowledge. One area related to cultural competence that teachers need to improve on is validating students' cultures in the classroom environment as a way to foster student engagement. As discussed in Chapter 2, this could include a number of practices that move beyond the content of the class materials.

Some aspects of the third proposition, sociopolitical consciousness, were also recognized in the practices and approaches of CCSD's teachers. As the researcher pointed out in the crosswalk and ranking system section of Chapter 4, several teachers in the district are providing an opportunity for students to do work that may bring about social change. This was also supported by the students' responses to the student questionnaire question #13 – Social Change. While the opportunity for working towards social change proves to be a strength, teachers within the district need to improve when it comes to helping students navigate and overcome oppressive practices and structures. This also includes teachers' need to increase their understanding and knowledge of oppressive structures and practices currently facing students in the district.

Sub Research Question #1: What are teachers' perceptions of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant teaching strategies?

As the researcher attempted to identify what perceptions teachers in CCSD had of their abilities to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy, data from the teacher questionnaire and teacher interview were analyzed. The researcher found that teachers within Cooper County

School District perceived that they are engaging in culturally relevant practices. To arrive at this conclusion, the researcher analyzed questionnaire response averages, and any additional patterns, along with the conversations the researcher had with the teachers during the interview sessions.

One of the areas that highlight this perceived ability to engage in culturally relevant strategies is the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. On the questionnaire, the response options of "4" (Usually) and "5" (Always) received at least the second most responses on all 15 questions. This means that the teachers perceived that they are engaging in the various practices identified all of the time or most of the time. In looking at the questionnaire data, the researcher also noticed that for six out of the 15 total questions, the response options of "4" and "5" were the top two selections made.

While the responses for the interviews were not as conclusive for teachers identifying their abilities to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy, the researcher noted several areas where the teachers identified their strengths in their planning or teaching. Over half of the teachers perceived that they do a good job with finding a variety of diverse texts for their students to engage with. Through these texts, and through other classroom activities or projects, the teachers recognized that they are able to introduce diverse perspectives to their students. As was discussed during the interviews, these actions are done to help the students develop a greater sense of empathy and global awareness. Several of the teachers also discussed that they provide opportunities that validate their students' identity and allow them to show expression in various ways. To go along with this freedom of expression, many teachers stated that the students are given choice, however, a lot of the times they are choosing from selections created by the teacher.

Sub Research Question #2: What are students’ perceptions of their teachers’ abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?

To identify students’ perceptions of their teachers’ abilities to provide culturally relevant pedagogy, the researcher started by referencing the research question and data collection alignment table (Table 3.4) and the framework and data collection alignment table (Table 3.5) in Chapter 3. The researcher identified which questions on the district’s student questionnaire aligned to each of the three propositions of culturally relevant pedagogy. The researcher then took the data provided by Cooper County School District and averaged the response totals for the students’ responses that pertained to each proposition. Once the averages had been calculated, the researcher used this information to justify student perceptions.

On the student questionnaire there were six questions that aligned with Academic Achievement. The values the researcher came up with for each of the student groups were: whole group, 3.2; Black student subgroup, 3.3-3.7 (based on two questions with two “high” responses); Hispanic student subgroup, 3.2. Based on these numbers, the CCSD students who completed the questionnaire perceive that their teachers focus on and stress academic achievement a little more than “sometimes.” The Black student subgroup would perceive that this ranges from a little more than “sometimes” to close to “usually.”

In regards to Cultural Competence, the student questionnaire had 10 questions that aligned to the topic. In calculating the averages the researcher came up with the following values for the student groups: whole group, 2.9; Black student subgroup, 3.2; Hispanic student subgroup, 3.1. Based on these numbers, the CCSD students who completed the questionnaire perceive that their teachers address areas pertaining to cultural competence slightly less or slightly more than “sometimes.”

The proposition of Sociopolitical Consciousness is not discussed in-depth during the student questionnaire. For the one question that directly addresses having an opportunity to work towards social change, the student groups responded as follows: whole group, 3; Black student subgroup, 3 & 4 (based on two “high” responses); Hispanic student subgroup, 4. The data presented for these responses show that there is a good chance that a student from the Black subgroup or Hispanic subgroup perceives that their teachers provide them with an opportunity to engage in social change.

Despite the averages for highest response being right around or slightly above “3,” it is worth noting that the Black student subgroup had a large quantity of responses where “1” or “2” were their second highest response. This would likely mean that there is a large number of the Black student subgroup that perceives the teachers’ ability to engage in culturally relevant practices to be weak.

Sub Research Question #3: How do the perceptions of the teachers align and/or deviate from the perceptions of the students?

To be able to identify how the perceptions of the teachers aligned and/or deviated from the students’ perceptions, the researcher began by looking at Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 to find questionnaire questions that were common between both questionnaires. The researcher then averaged the most frequent response totals for the teachers’ and the students’ responses that pertained to each proposition and each subsection of the proposition. Once the averages had been calculated, the researcher used this information to compare perceptions between the teachers and the students and to identify similarities or differences.

The questionnaires that were provided to the teachers and to the students were not identical, however, there were a number of questions that mirrored each other (#1-8 on both, and

#12 teacher/#11 student). By looking at these specific questions, the researcher was able to compare the responses to see how they aligned or deviated from each other. Based on the responses for similar questions, there was only one question where all groups (teachers, student whole group, Black subgroup, Hispanic subgroup) matched the highest response option. However, as was discussed in Chapter 4, there were some areas where the teachers and the whole group aligned, but the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup did not align and had a lower rated response.

Despite the similarity previously identified, for the majority of questions on the questionnaire the teacher perceptions deviated from the perceptions of the students. Looking at the answer options for each of the questions, the researcher noticed that the teachers rated their ability to engage with culturally relevant teaching practices higher than the students rated similar practices. This can be seen when looking at the responses for the whole student group as well as for the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup.

On the student questionnaire there were three questions that did not directly align to questions on the teacher questionnaire, but were compatible with topics discussed during the interviews. The responses to two of these questions did not directly align to perceptions held by the teachers. Question #9 asked the students if the materials their teachers use allow them to learn about diverse perspectives. All three student groups that have been discussed (whole group, Black student subgroup, and Hispanic student subgroup), selected “3” for their most frequent response option. Therefore, despite teachers’ belief that they are doing a good job of providing their students with exposure to diverse perspectives, the students believe that this is only happening “sometimes.” Question #10 is the second question that was not included on the teacher questionnaire. This question states that students are able to see themselves (culturally,

racially, ethnically) in the materials that their teachers use in the classroom. Similar to Question #9, all student groups had the highest totals for category “3.” It is worth noting that each of the three groups did have option “4” as the second highest response totals. The student responses to this question deviate from the responses shared by a number of teachers during the interview sessions.

One area of alignment between teachers’ perceptions and students’ perception could be seen with the topic of social change. During the interviews the teachers were asked specifically about their classroom being a site to create social change (Question #15). As Chapter 4 pointed out, the majority of teachers who participated in the interviews were able to discuss ways that social change was happening based on the activities and interactions within their classrooms. For the students, question #13 of the questionnaire asked them if they have classes where they are able to engage in work that will bring about social change. For the whole group of students, the option with the highest number of responses was “3” (Sometimes). However, data for the Black subgroup and Hispanic subgroup shows that both of these groups selected “4” the most. By believing that social change can “usually” happen aligns with the teachers acknowledgement that they provide space for change to happen. To gain a better understanding of the types of social change that students are experiencing an activity like a student focus group or student interviews could be incorporated.

Implications for Practice

In addition to conducting this research for the sole purposes of the study and to support Cooper County School District, there are multiple ways that the research adds to the larger body of literature. The researcher structured the literature review in such a way that it would go beyond simply stating what culturally relevant pedagogy is. Instead, the researcher introduced

the topics of culture and pedagogy and explored the prior research to explain the value of incorporating culturally relevant practices. Moving on from the overview that discussed what culturally relevant pedagogy is, the researcher sought out examples of what culturally relevant practices look like when implemented across the curriculum. To give support to the value of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, the literature review also provided quantitative data to show instances where culturally relevant teaching resulted in increased performance for students of color.

Additionally, the research adds to the larger body of research because it highlights the importance of focusing on the topic of race when implementing culturally relevant practices. The importance of focusing on race can also be expanded to include when a school district is attempting to do equity work. During this study, the use of CRT allowed the researcher to analyze what the district said they were doing to help students of color. The critical race framework allowed the researcher to dig deeper and uncover practices and actions currently occurring or soon to be implemented that have no recognition of race. The study showed that certain topics may appear to be equitable, however, when analyzed through a CRT lens, a new reality is apparent.

The research also provided a counter argument to current criticisms of critical race theory. Through discussion and analysis, the researcher showed that CRT is not something that is present in the classroom curriculum or a way that students are being indoctrinated to hate each other. Instead, the study showed how the tenets of CRT could be used to analyze a school district and its programs. The findings of such analysis could be provided to the district so they could see what is occurring and how certain actions and programs may actually be obstructing the narrowing of the gaps they are intended to fix.

The data that was presented in Chapter 4 identifies various ways that culturally relevant pedagogy may show up in a teacher's repertoire. By using the definitions and tables from the literature review, the researcher was able to take a deeper dive into what teachers are doing with their diverse learners. As was discussed, many teachers were incorporating some components of culturally relevant pedagogy even though they may not know it. Other teachers may think that they are incorporating these practices, while in fact their students are missing out.

By incorporating the student questionnaire data, the researcher confirmed the value of using students' counternarrative. By introducing the students' voice into the study, the researcher was able to identify perceptions that the students had in regards to the same topics the teachers had spoke on. The counternarrative, in this instance, was able to explore how the students' perceptions aligned with or disputed what the teachers were saying. The research showed multiple instances where the students and teachers did not align with their perceptions. This aligns with what CRT scholars say about incorporating counterstorytelling to get a better picture of what is really occurring.

By using critical race theory as a theoretical framework, the researcher was able to confirm the necessity for race being centered when focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy. Despite confirmation that teachers in CCSD were incorporating certain components of culturally relevant pedagogy, the use of CRT was able to identify specific areas where improvement is still needed to overcome systemic inequities.

Suggestions for Practitioners, School Leaders, and Districts

District Leadership

District leaders who are looking to introduce and/or incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy into their district goals must have a clear idea and focus of what they want. A district

should not simply say that they want to do culturally relevant pedagogy. Instead, they need to have an idea of what their goal is for schools and teachers. District leadership should identify how they will share this vision with the district's teachers and how they will hold teachers accountable to learn about the practices and to incorporate them in their classrooms.

When seeking to include culturally relevant practices in a district's schools, district leadership must understand what culturally relevant pedagogy is and what it looks like in action. District leadership should not simply operate off of a buzz phrase and expect great things to happen in their schools. District leaders must understand that to be successful, practitioners must study and understand culture and cultures. Districts should provide intentional professional development opportunities for teachers to learn about the various ways of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy.

As district leaders take the necessary steps to embrace culturally relevant practices, they must be prepared to be uncomfortable and to address uncomfortable topics. On a personal level, district leaders should be prepared to acknowledge their own personal biases. They need to be open to fully acknowledging what is going on around them. District leaders must also recognize various forms of systemic racism and work towards eradicating them. Leaders need to be prepared to address uncomfortable topics related to race and the district's current gaps with the board of education. The idea of equitable work may have been accepted because it has a positive connotation and looks good for the district. However, district leaders will need to work with the board to move past safe topics and address the topics that are needed to make a difference. District leadership, especially in a majority White district like CCSD, will also need to be prepared to educate families on how culturally relevant pedagogy benefits all students and is not taking away from the education experience of any other students.

As was previously mentioned, district leadership must also reevaluate the professional development that is being offered by the district. The district and individual schools must move to offer PD that teaches how to implement culturally relevant practices and to address other equity issues. The district should pay attention to who is creating the PD and ensure that the presentation of materials is not designed to simply gloss over difficult topics. District PD for culturally relevant topics and other topics pertaining to race should be provided for all levels (district leadership, school leadership, and teachers). District leadership needs to create a plan that will allow them to hold teachers accountable for implementing the practices. As various forms of professional development are implemented, district leadership should also be open to engaging with students of color to incorporate student voice into what is being presented.

One final suggestion for district leadership is to continue to invest in the teachers of the district. Before setting sights on practices like culturally relevant pedagogy, districts should ensure that their teachers are developing the basic skills and pedagogical content knowledge to be able to engage with greater challenges like culturally relevant pedagogy.

School Leadership

School leaders should also take several important steps to ensure successful implementation of culturally relevant practices. To begin, similar to district leadership, a school leader must be prepared to acknowledge their own biases and be prepared to address uncomfortable topics. They need to be able to address these topics with their teachers and be willing to not ignore their teachers' actions if implementation is not being done. School leaders must also be ready to have conversations with students' families about how incorporating culturally relevant practices have a benefit for all students' learning.

Additionally, school leaders should look at their school data and see what it is telling them. Leaders should identify areas where potential disconnect is happening. From there, school leadership should work to explore various options for improving test scores, improving participation rates in advanced courses, and reducing discrepancies in discipline statistics. As various options are explored, school leaders must be deliberate about sharing data and solutions with their teachers. If a school is predominantly White, leadership needs to ensure they are not overlooking any subgroups of students that may be showing up under an asterisk. This data needs to be analyzed and presented to teachers as well.

If a school leader decides that stressing implementation of culturally relevant practices is something that would be beneficial, they need to be ready to lead by example. School leaders should know what culturally relevant pedagogy is and what it is not. They should know what it looks like in practice and know that it will likely look different from room to room. School leaders should also recognize what they want teachers to be able to do and what they hope the outcome will be. This will allow them to lead with a focus.

When taking actions to reduce the gaps that currently exist, school leaders will need to address race more thoroughly. Leaders need to be careful to not fall victim to the ideas of liberalism, especially colorblindness. School leaders will want to serve “all” students and may feel uncomfortable addressing race. As the research cited, they may feel like they are singling out certain students or ignoring others if they begin to make acknowledging race a necessity. However, to improve a school’s performance, increase students of color participation in advanced classes, and reduce discipline disproportionalities, leaders must focus on which students need the most resources and which policies need the biggest changes.

An additional suggestion has to do with actions school leadership can take to help facilitate the transition to using more culturally relevant practices. School leaders should work with district leadership and teacher leaders to identify what barriers may be encountered during the implementation process. Working closely with others to come up with solutions for overcoming these barriers will allow school leaders to help reduce these challenges. School leaders should also recognize that the learning process would be ongoing. They should plan for incorporating multiple professional development sessions that will be beneficial to their staff. Leaders should also look for ways to identify teachers who are incorporating certain practices and provide an opportunity for teachers to learn from them.

Practitioners

The teachers in the classroom typically face the greatest challenge when being asked to incorporate a new practice in their instruction. They have relied on certain practices and methods for a period of time and all of a sudden are asked to try something entirely or partially different. A similar challenge faces teachers who have never incorporated culturally relevant practices, but are asked to by their administration or district. Teachers facing these challenges must remember to always keep their students in mind. Certain teaching practices may reach a portion of the students in a classroom, but a number of students are not learning. Teachers need to keep these students in mind and be open to ways to accommodate their learning styles in an effort to improve learning in the entire school. This commitment to improved performance will help districts and individual schools begin to reduce gaps similar to those identified in Chapters 1 and 4.

When being asked to include culturally relevant teaching in the classroom teachers must be careful not to resort to cultural stereotypes or what they think would be relevant for their

current students based on appearance. Teachers must take the time to learn about the various cultures of their students and take the time necessary to plan ways to make the learning more relevant. The relevance of the learning may not solely rest in the material being taught, but may also be seen in the instructional techniques selected by the teachers. When challenged by this situation, teachers need to be comfortable asking for help. If resources are not available, teachers should reach out to school and district leadership to see what is available. If professional development is not being offered or is lacking certain skills that would be beneficial, teachers should be comfortable asking for help in these situations. If this is a practice that teachers have never engaged in before the learning process will take some time. Teachers and leadership must recognize this while they work to make improvements for their students.

Even when the best professional development is offered and presented it may not be the ideal solution for incorporating effective culturally relevant practices into the classroom. There may come a time when the best option for learning is having conversations with the students. These conversations will have to move beyond the basic questions about favorite food, favorite music, and out of school hobbies. These conversations should seek to find out about students' learning preferences and any other intricacies or stimuli that may help them master certain concepts. As the research has discussed, there may even come a time when the teacher needs to literally switch seats with the student and learn from their instructional methods (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These various approaches are ways to support teachers as they take on the challenge of implementing culturally relevant practices in their classroom.

When teachers decide that they are going to commit to providing their students with culturally relevant practices, they must be prepared for the challenges that may face them. As was addressed with both district and school leaders, teachers must also be open to confronting

and moving past their biases. Practitioners will need to be ready to move beyond safe topics, such as cultural celebrations and holidays, and be willing to work to disrupt systemic barriers that have created certain gaps. Teachers will also need to recognize the cultural and racial differences of their individual students and must work to understand the individual challenges faced by certain subgroups of students. Some teachers may hesitate when it comes to acknowledging racial differences among students and may want to maintain a colorblind approach even as they bring cultural artifacts into the classroom. These teachers need to understand that their inability to recognize their individual students is doing more harm and is not allowing them to decrease the current gaps that exist.

Another suggestion for teachers is to always pay attention to who the individual students in the classroom are. If the racial and cultural make up of students changes from year-to-year, the teachers must be flexible in their approach to incorporating culturally relevant practices. As the cultures in their classroom change, so should the teaching being presented to the students of those cultures. In addition to who is sitting in the classroom, teachers should also pay attention to who is performing academically in the class and who is not. Individual performance may not be directly related to a student's ability, but may have something to do with the instructional practices being used or assessment methods that have been chosen. Teachers will need to scrutinize their practice and recognize when there is a disconnect between what they are doing and how the students are learning. The success of using culturally relevant practices is not something that is self-reported. Teachers need to analyze their short-term data to identify the impact their teaching is having. When they recognize gaps, they should look for ways to make adjustments. Long-term success may be apparent by analyzing end-of-grade test trends over a period of years.

Teachers who are currently teaching advanced courses should constantly be looking for ways to increase representation of students of color in their classes. If a teacher is teaching AP, Honors, or AIG classes, they need to take an active role in attempting to reduce the participation gaps that currently exist. Teachers of these classes should not simply complain about the homogeneity of their classroom and not be willing to be part of making a change. At the same time, teachers of these classes should not grow comfortable with the homogeneity of their classes and attempt to maintain it. Teachers who are not currently teaching advanced level classes can also be part of the recruitment process. The limited number of students of color participating in these classes is impacting entire districts and not just the individual classrooms where the disparities exist. Teachers can talk with students, administrators, parents, counselors, and other teachers in an attempt to identify students who may have been overlooked from participating in these advanced programs.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher acknowledges that one of the limitations of this study was that it was based on teachers' perceptions. Yes, there was room for student voice to balance things out, however, this study did not allow for the opportunity to verify teachers' perceptions. One recommendation for future research would be to incorporate various practices to verify teachers' perceptions. This would allow a researcher to see if what teachers think they are doing, in regards to culturally relevant teaching, is actually showing up in their classroom practices and lesson planning. To verify teachers' perceptions multiple approaches could be taken. To begin, a researcher or research team could conduct classroom observations and an audit of a teacher's planning approaches and materials. By taking this approach the researcher would be able to identify what was happening over the course of multiple lessons within a teacher's classroom.

The researcher would be able to become part of the classroom environment and would have the opportunity to directly observe the artifacts that were present, how students engaged in the class content, and how students moved around the room. Classroom observations would also allow the researcher to see the teachers in action. A teacher would not be able to create a portrayal of their teaching practice, but instead would need to perform in a culturally relevant manner. By auditing a teacher's lesson plans or even planning practices, a researcher would have a chance to see what resources and supplemental materials are referenced during the planning process.

An additional approach to verify teachers' perceptions is to conduct interviews with school level administrators. There is a chance that a school administrator has seen a teacher deliver lessons within the classroom and interact with the student population outside of the classroom. An administrator may also have an idea about what professional development goals a teacher has and if the teacher serves on any committees. Depending on the situation, all of these components could provide a confirming look at the extent of culturally relevant practices taken by the teacher.

To accompany the previous two recommendations for assessing teachers' practices, the researcher also recommends that future research could conduct an audit of the professional development being presented by the district and/or the equity team. During the interviews there were multiple comments about concerns related to the district's professional development. The researcher could only take the teachers' word for it and had no way of confirming what was taking place. By conducting an audit of the district's PD, the researcher would be able to look at what topics an equity-minded district is offering and how the materials are being presented. To expand on the audit further, an additional recommendation would include identifying how

teachers are being held accountable for what they engage in during the PD as well as how the PD sessions are addressing race.

An additional recommendation that the researcher would make for future study is to expand the study to include elementary teachers and elementary schools for all components of the study. During the current study, the researcher did incorporate elementary teachers for the questionnaire portion of data collection. The elementary teachers totaled 34% of the 148 teachers who responded to the questionnaire. The recommendation to include elementary teachers would branch out to the interview portion and five-year analysis of data collection. By expanding the research to include elementary teachers, a researcher would be able to capture teachers' perceptions for all grade levels within the district.

In an attempt to expand the research and get a better perspective for the district, the researcher makes several recommendations. To begin, the researcher recommends getting all schools and more teachers involved with responding to the teacher questionnaire. This would increase the participation rate for the survey and would potentially provide a better understanding of what teachers from the entire district perceived as their ability to engage with culturally relevant practices. This could perhaps be achieved by reaching out to school administrators beforehand to provide an overview of the research and stress its importance in relation to district goals. In addition to getting more teachers from all schools participating, the researcher recommends selecting teachers from all schools to participate in the interviews. The current study left participation in the interviews to chance based on teachers' willingness to complete the final question of the questionnaire. This approach was able to yield enough participants for the study, however, equal participation of teachers from all middle and high schools did not occur.

Another recommendation for expanding the research in an attempt to gain a greater perspective of what is going on in Cooper County School District has to do with teacher recruitment for the study. In particular, the research recommends increasing the number of Black teachers to respond to the survey and participate in the interviews. While the researcher recognizes that the CCSD teacher demographics report that 83% of the teachers in the district identify as White and 8% identify as Black, the data collection did not mirror these percentages. As was previously mentioned, out of the 148 respondents on the questionnaire only 4% identify as Black. Out of the 12 teachers who participated in the interviews, two identify as being of two or more races, but no participants identify as Black. By increasing these participation numbers a research team would be able to capture data that was more representative of all teachers in the district.

One final recommendation has to do with the student component of the data collection used during this study. The researcher recommends expanding the methods for capturing student voice to better juxtapose with teachers' perceptions. In this study student voice was captured through a student questionnaire that was conducted by the district. The researcher was able to receive this secondary data and incorporate it into the study. To allow for more opportunity to include student voice, the researcher recommends conducting multiple focus groups across all grade levels (elementary, middle school, and high school). The protocols used for each focus group could be catered to the maturity level of the students participating. The researcher also recommends incorporating additional student questionnaires to be given to students in upper grade levels. These questionnaires could be designed to mirror what is asked of teachers in the teacher questionnaire and would provide the district with a better understanding of how the students in CCSD currently feel about practices being used by their teachers.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short, 15-item questionnaire. This questionnaire is part of a research project being conducted at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. The research will be focusing on issues pertaining to equity within the school district. Please be assured that there are no right or wrong responses; we are looking for honest feedback and reflection.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate, or you may decide which questions to answer and which questions to leave blank. All participant information will remain anonymous. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you are giving consent that your anonymous responses may be used in this study.

Teacher Demographics (Drop down selections):

Grade Level (Elementary, Middle School, High School, Other ____)

Racial Identification (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Two or more races)

Gender Identification (Male, Female, Non-Binary, Prefer to Self-Describe ____)

Teaching Experience (1-5 years, 6-11 years, 12-16 years, 16+ years)

Please respond to each item using the following 5-option scale to indicate your frequency doing the identified practice: *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Usually, and Always*.

1. I make an effort to get to know my students' families and backgrounds.
2. I use surveys to find out about my students' classroom preferences.
3. I elicit students' experiences in pre-reading and pre-listening activities.
4. I have students work independently, selecting their own learning activities.
5. I spend time outside of class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.

6. I supplement the curriculum with lessons about current events.
7. I ask for student input when planning lessons and activities.
8. I encourage students to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.
9. I review and assess curricula and instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weakness, and relevance to students' interest and instructional needs, and revise them if necessary.
10. I develop a repertoire of instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students to serve as a scaffold for learning.
11. I use a variety of assessment techniques, such as self-assessment, portfolios, and so on, to evaluate students' performance in favor of cultural diversity.
12. I utilize a variety of instructional methods to match students' learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining their attention and interest in learning.
13. I communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students.
14. I develop and maintain positive, meaningful, caring, and trusting relationships with students.
15. I create a community of learners by encouraging students to focus on collective work, responsibility, and cooperation.

In addition to this questionnaire, the researcher would enjoy the opportunity to engage in a more in-depth conversation with you related to these topics. If you would be willing to meet with the researcher, virtually, in-person, or over the phone, please provide your name and email address. If selected, the researcher will be in touch to set up a time to meet.

APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions #1-15:

1. Talk to me about your teaching and what is most important to you when planning and preparing your daily instruction.
2. How would you describe your philosophy of teaching? How do you think your students would describe your teaching style and classroom environment?
3. How would you describe the type of learning that students engage in within your classroom?
4. Describe what you consider to be the ideal instruction for your students.
5. How would you describe your classroom environment to a stranger? Provide as much detail as possible.
6. What messages do the artifacts in your classroom convey to a stranger?
7. How do you make your lessons relate to your culturally diverse students?
8. How do you feel about incorporating multicultural curriculum content in your classroom?
9. Could you describe any approaches you take to get to know the cultures of your students and how you incorporate this into your classroom practices? Probing: Do you think you have difficulty doing this?
10. Do you plan cultural activities as part of your instruction? If so describe some of these activities.
11. Do you involve parents and members of the community in school activities whenever possible? What are some examples?
12. What components do you think are necessary for student success in your classroom?
13. What practices do you use to differentiate instruction?
14. How do you choose your supplemental materials?

15. Would you describe your classroom as a site to create social change? If yes, what leads you to say this? If no, what changes would you need to make for this to happen? Would you be willing to do this?

APPENDIX C: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS FROM CCSD

Sub Research Question #2: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities to provide culturally relevant instruction to them and their peers?

Student Questionnaire Questions:

Please respond to each item using the following 5-option scale to indicate your frequency doing the identified practice: *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Usually, and Always*.

1. My teachers make an effort to get to know about my family and my background.
2. My teachers use surveys to find out about my classroom preferences.
3. My teachers ask about my experiences by using pre-reading and pre-listening activities.
4. In my classes I am allowed to work independently, selecting my own learning activities.
5. My teachers spend time outside of class learning about my culture and the languages I speak.
6. My teachers supplement the curriculum with lessons about current events.
7. My teachers ask for my input when planning lessons and activities.
8. In my classes, I am encouraged to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.
9. The materials my teachers use allow me to learn about diverse perspectives.
10. I am able to see myself (culturally, racially, ethnically) in the materials my teachers use in the classroom.
11. My teachers utilize a variety of instructional methods to match my learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining my attention and interest in learning.
12. My teachers regularly communicate messages of academic success to me.
13. I have classes where I am able to engage in work that will bring on social change.

APPENDIX D: FIVE-YEAR DATA

Ashley Lane High School 2014-2015								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	73.6	63.0	X	67.0	X	X	287.10	54.84
Asian	*	*	X	*	X	X	*	*
Black	46.2	46.2	X	50.0	X	X	454.55	295.45
Hispanic	57.1	57.1	X	16.7	X	X	388.90	55.56
Ashley Lane High School 2015-2016								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	57.7	55.2	X	58.9	88.10	0.0	477.51	58.82
Asian	*	*	X	*	*	*	*	*
Black	54.5	33.3	X	50.0	3.57	0.0	957.45	276.60
Hispanic	50.0	15.4	X	45.5	5.95	0.0	973.68	52.63
Ashley Lane High School 2016-2017								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	60.0	56.3	X	73.1	81.33	0.0	450.98	58.82
Asian	*	*	X	*	*	*	*	*
Black	42.9	14.3	X	40.0	6.67	0.0	937.50	270.83
Hispanic	58.3	40.0	X	33.3	9.33	0.0	1027.78	55.56
Ashley Lane High School 2017-2018								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	54.0	56.0	X	57.0	84.75	0.0	315.11	70.74
Asian	*	*	X	*	*	*	*	*
Black	50.0	20.0	X	40.0	6.78	0.0	840.91	272.73
Hispanic	43.0	50.0	X	43.0	5.08	0.0	468.09	85.11
Ashley Lane High School 2018-2019								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	61.0	52.0	62.0	55.0	81.69	0.0	350.48	96.46
Asian	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Black	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.63	0.0	534.88	139.54
Hispanic	47.0	n/a	40.0	40.0	8.45	0.0	166.67	187.50

Burton High School 2014-2015								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	70.2	66.7	X	54.2	X	X	342.72	197.18
Asian	*	*	X	*	X	X	*	*
Black	45.5	9.1	X	34.5	X	X	950	350
Hispanic	42.3	38.9	X	46.6	X	X	645.32	305.42
Burton High School 2015-2016								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	66.0	79.2	X	66.0	41.72	0.0	357.80	68.81
Asian	*	*	X	*	0.61	0.0	*	*
Black	24.2	33.3	X	14.8	9.82	0.0	1111.11	314.81
Hispanic	47.9	46.9	X	35.7	47.24	0.0	487.44	138.19
Burton High School 2016-2017								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	71.7	68.1	X	65.3	25.73	0.0	391.96	75.38
Asian	*	*	X	*	0.50	0.0	*	*
Black	50.0	20.7	X	34.6	6.80	0.0	1043.48	295.65
Hispanic	37.1	29.1	X	34.2	63.60	0.0	405.86	115.06
Burton High School 2017-2018								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	69.0	71.0	X	71.0	30.59	0.0	236.72	101.45
Asian	*	*	X	*	1.76	0.0	n/a	n/a
Black	33.0	25.0	X	10.0	4.71	0.0	754.55	445.46
Hispanic	38.0	33.0	X	27.0	61.76	0.0	481.48	95.52
Burton High School 2018-2019								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	74.0	27.0	68.0	69.0	33.33	0.0	315.27	118.23
Asian	*	*	*	*	1.82	0.0	n/a	n/a
Black	35.0	22.0	22.0	24.0	4.24	0.0	1536.84	852.63
Hispanic	50.0	19.0	41.0	35.0	59.39	0.0	952.00	306.00

Knight High School 2014-2015								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	78.9	74.2	X	81.4	X	X	246.46	80.19
Asian	*	*	X	*	X	X	*	*
Black	43.8	42.9	X	40.8	X	X	797.98	227.27
Hispanic	42.5	32.8	X	50.0	X	X	761.63	104.65
Knight High School 2015-2016								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	73.0	69.1	X	68.3	81.12	0.0	160.92	80.46
Asian	*	*	X	*	3.53	0.0	*	*
Black	37.7	31.7	X	34.6	5.40	0.0	524.32	145.96
Hispanic	34.2	32.9	X	26.2	6.22	0.0	433.67	173.47
Knight High School 2016-2017								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	78.4	73.3	X	71.0	86.50	0.0	156.60	78.30
Asian	*	*	X	*	2.54	0.0	*	*
Black	32.7	36.8	X	18.2	4.86	0.0	532.97	148.35
Hispanic	51.8	36.2	X	41.0	4.23	0.0	364.81	145.92
Knight High School 2017-2018								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	78.0	77.0	X	74.0	82.76	0.0	247.73	47.73
Asian	*	*	X	*	1.72	0.0	43.48	0.0
Black	44.0	45.0	X	39.0	6.55	0.0	624.28	161.85
Hispanic	45.0	38.0	X	39.0	7.59	0.0	469.57	108.70
Knight High School 2018-2019								
Category								
Subgroup	English II	Math I	Math III	Biology	AP	IB	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	79.0	50.0	65.0	84.0	81.53	0.0	228.70	77.35
Asian	*	*	*	*	2.81	0.0	68.97	0.0
Black	40.0	17.0	23.0	38.0	5.22	0.0	889.57	331.29
Hispanic	41.0	17.0	38.0	37.0	6.43	0.0	438.02	70.25

Davis Middle School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	60.0	40.0	62.0	298.25	105.26
Asian	71.0	71.0	*	*	*
Black	28.0	12.0	35.0	378.79	212.12
Hispanic	38.0	26.0	45.0	115.79	15.79
Davis Middle School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	61.0	53.0	57.0	142.86	100
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	26.0	13.0	24.0	944.44	250
Hispanic	38.0	29.0	36.0	296.10	33.77
Davis Middle School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	64.0	52.0	77.0	147.06	102.94
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	33.0	19.0	43.0	957.75	253.52
Hispanic	49.0	43.0	62.0	297.65	33.94
Davis Middle School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	68.0	53.0	68.0	194.81	584.42
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	31.0	20.0	21.0	388.89	1055.56
Hispanic	48.0	40.0	54.0	60.15	213.03
Davis Middle School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	68.0	58.0	72.0	84.51	464.79
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	34.0	17.0	46.0	285.71	1238.10
Hispanic	45.0	41.0	63.0	74.07	328.70

Palt Middle School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	67.0	50.0	75.0	58.06	38.71
Asian	70.0	60.0	*	*	*
Black	31.0	20.0	42.0	342.47	301.37
Hispanic	40.0	35.0	38.0	113.21	56.60
Palt Middle School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	71.0	57.0	82.0	93.33	35.56
Asian	80.0	60.0	*	*	*
Black	37.0	22.0	41.0	371.43	257.14
Hispanic	38.0	32.0	63.0	127.27	109.09
Palt Middle School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	77.0	69.0	93.0	92.11	35.09
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	44.0	23.0	46.0	346.67	240
Hispanic	49.0	39.0	51.0	95.89	82.19
Palt Middle School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	75.0	65.0	83.0	241.64	78.07
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	44.0	14.0	53.0	527.78	361.11
Hispanic	58.0	40.0	56.0	166.67	69.44
Palt Middle School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	78.0	74.0	85.0	172.69	72.29
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	33.0	33.0	39.0	392.16	215.16
Hispanic	63.0	53.0	68.0	194.81	38.96

Sylvester Middle School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	84.0	78.0	86.0	130.08	46.07
Asian	60.0	80.0	*	*	*
Black	49.0	43.0	50.0	425.53	85.11
Hispanic	34.0	30.0	36.0	563.11	271.84
Sylvester Middle School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	85.0	81.0	85.0	106.70	22.33
Asian	64.0	73.0	*	*	*
Black	47.0	42.0	47.0	181.82	227.27
Hispanic	34.0	29.0	40.0	250	161.29
Sylvester Middle School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	81.0	80.0	93.0	103.86	21.74
Asian	87.0	80.0	*	*	*
Black	40.0	35.0	64.0	186.05	232.56
Hispanic	34.0	36.0	49.0	248	160
Sylvester Middle School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	85.0	81.0	95.0	82.16	14.09
Asian	89.0	83.0	*	*	*
Black	49.0	24.0	60.0	275.00	175.00
Hispanic	45.0	43.0	63.0	186.57	126.87
Sylvester Middle School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	82.0	78.0	94.0	106.67	24.44
Asian	78.0	83.0	90.0	*	*
Black	50.0	40.0	44.0	410.26	128.21
Hispanic	52.0	43.0	64.0	101.56	15.63

Castleton School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	69.9	54.4	75.7	149.76	67.63
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	37.5	50.0	*	N/A	N/A
Castleton School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	68.2	57.4	72.0	37.63	32.26
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	333.33	333.33
Hispanic	41.7	41.7	*	55.56	55.56
Castleton School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	72.2	59.0	78.4	37.63	32.26
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	333.33	333.33
Hispanic	45.5	54.5	*	66.67	66.67
Castleton School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	74.0	71.0	86.0	145.46	30.30
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Hispanic	*	*	*	62.50	62.50
Castleton School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	78.0	67.0	84.0	91.95	28.74
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*
Hispanic	70.0	70.0	*	*	*

Sunderland School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	62.4	59.5	69.6	121.21	73.59
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	30.0	35.0	44.0	217.39	86.96
Hispanic	43.2	45.9	25.0	120	40
Sunderland School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	62.4	57.6	74.1	134.45	42.02
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	21.1	42.1	*	380.95	190.48
Hispanic	38.5	56.4	75.0	36.36	72.73
Sunderland School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	60.5	61.1	78.8	136.75	42.74
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	25.0	40.0	*	320	160
Hispanic	54.3	57.1	81.3	38.46	76.92
Sunderland School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	64.0	62.0	75.0	91.74	36.70
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	44.0	39.0	*	161.29	32.26
Hispanic	58.0	52.0	64.0	108.70	86.96
Sunderland School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	65.0	69.0	88.0	47.85	43.06
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	44.0	50.0	*	88.24	147.06
Hispanic	48.0	57.0	79.0	89.29	17.86

Middleborough School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	64.0	60.7	87.5	243.90	4.88
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	43.2	32.4	57.1	934.78	21.74
Hispanic	44.4	55.6	*	71.43	0
Middleborough School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	67.1	67.1	84.6	314.72	25.38
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	37.1	28.6	61.5	760.87	65.22
Hispanic	53.8	46.2	*	133.33	0
Middleborough School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	66.2	70.2	81.1	311.56	25.13
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	41.4	48.3	*	813.95	69.77
Hispanic	33.3	50.0	*	74.07	0
Middleborough School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	69.0	74.0	89.0	340.91	39.77
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	44.0	59.0	*	400.00	57.14
Hispanic	18.0	47.0	*	250.00	50.00
Middleborough School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	68.0	75.0	83.0	18.52	24.69
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	43.0	57.0	*	0.00	133.33
Hispanic	30.0	57.0	*	0.00	83.33

Ranger Locks 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	74.2	60.6	74.5	15.15	10.10
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	19.2	11.5	16.7	0	24.39
Hispanic	50.0	57.7	75.0	0	44.44
Ranger Locks 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	70.6	56.3	70.2	10.81	27.03
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	23.8	19.0	*	22.73	68.18
Hispanic	33.3	51.6	50.0	0	0
Ranger Locks 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	75.4	64.2	87.5	10.70	26.74
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	20.8	25.0	41.7	24.39	73.17
Hispanic	33.3	50.0	*	0	0
Ranger Locks 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	76.0	66.0	89.0	*	*
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	22.0	22.0	*	0.00	0.00
Hispanic	43.0	30.0	60.0	*	*
Ranger Locks 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	74.0	70.0	82.0	0.00	11.17
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	19.0	50.0	*	23.26	69.77
Hispanic	49.0	51.0	43.0	0.00	54.55

Vincent School 2014-2015					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	74.5	73.6	78.6	56.86	13.38
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	50.0	57.1	42.9	190.48	0
Hispanic	25.6	43.6	18.8	180.33	16.39
Vincent School 2015-2016					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	69.0	65.5	83.8	101.75	21.05
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	46.7	53.3	*	157.89	315.79
Hispanic	31.4	37.1	58.3	240.74	74.07
Vincent School 2016-2017					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	71.6	70.7	83.3	105.84	21.90
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	73.3	80.0	*	142.86	285.71
Hispanic	44.4	47.2	*	245.28	75.47
Vincent School 2017-2018					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	72.0	78.0	83.0	102.19	36.50
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	62.0	69.0	*	250.00	0.00
Hispanic	31.0	46.0	39.0	266.67	50.00
Vincent School 2018-2019					
Category					
Subgroup	Reading	Math	Science	ISS (per 1000)	OSS (per 1000)
White	73.0	78.0	85.0	111.55	11.95
Asian	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	545.46	0.00
Hispanic	20.0	53.0	58.0	218.18	18.18

APPENDIX E: DISTRICT LEVEL EQUITY FOCUS

- Data analysis by subgroups
- Professional development on how to differentiate and personalize learning in digital teaching
- Virtual Reality kits were purchased for all schools. Training to be provided to help bring opportunities to ALL students
- Support to help teachers understand how to use blended learning with all students and not just honors students
- Child Nutrition menu has cultural foods throughout the menu and throughout the year
- Specific efforts to ensure diversity in public relations stories and photos
- Recruitment efforts to find diverse staff - HBCU recruitment fairs
- Cultural arts assemblies have a diverse themes. Residencies through Cooper Arts are asked to be cultural or diverse in some way
- AVID support and trainings throughout the year and summer institutes
- Support of the Dual Language program with professional development and district oversight
- Translation services provided for all schools
- Provided Culturally Relevant Teaching training for beginning teachers
- Planning and involvement of students in the MLK program
- Website filtering is impartial
- Affiliation with hiring organizations to bring in diverse employees - Participate, EPI, etc.
- Translation services at district events - science fair, young author events
- Intentional connections to universities to seek diverse candidates
- Summer maintenance program is purposeful in hiring diverse students to offer leadership opportunities
- Monitoring substitutes and removing individuals that are not able to work with diverse students
- Targeted discussions with counselors to promote all students having access to advanced courses- reduction in gatekeeping to honors and AP courses
- Various research partnerships to study student subgroup achievement and strategies.
- Specific training and strategies to reduce discipline disproportionality
- Cooper County Virtual Academy provides an opportunity for students who need something different
- Cooper Academy seeks to help ALL students be successful and graduate
- Student equity focus groups
- Development of an equity team
- Working to purchase translation kits/devices for every school.
- Boys of Color professional development
- Restorative Practices training for all schools
- Racial Equity Institute groundwater training for all school leaders, district directors, and all S.S teachers 6-12.
- Racial Equity Institute Phase 1 training for some staff

APPENDIX F: SCHOOL LEVEL EQUITY FOCUS

Topic	Activity
Trainings/Meetings for Teachers/Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis by subgroups • Poverty simulation trainings • AVID trainings and events • Specific equity articles shared in faculty meetings • Representative on the district equity team
School-wide Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrations of growth and not just high achievement • Family culture nights to celebrate diversity • Growth awards for awards days and assemblies - not just all A students get awards • MLK celebration and assembly • Cultural and social justice student work displays • Specific identification for character awards and other words to ensure award recipients represent the school body • Unity Week events • Shout out boards for teachers and kids to recognize others • Celebration of World Peace Day • Charger Day to promote team building and getting to know new people in the school
Clubs/Programs for Students to Participate in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with students in Africa • After School clubs to target specific racial groups • MLK Essay Contest • Participation in Unity Day • Participation in Mix it Up Day • Be the Change Clubs • PRIDE clubs to support LGBTQ students • Signing and acknowledging The Birmingham Pledge • Affinity groups like My Brothers Keeper and My Sisters Keeper at multiple schools • Girls coding clubs • Morning math club to target students of color specifically to increase subgroup growth and proficiency • Girls book clubs targeting students of color • Boys book clubs to target students of color • Girls for STEM club to target students of color • Latino dance team • African American dance group • GSA club - Club for LGBTQ students • Robotics clubs with diverse membership

Topic	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LASO club - Clubs for Latin X students • Alumni group and annual celebrations • Yoga for girls club • Real Men Read program • Youth cooking classes
Student Focused Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual posters and signage across the school • Communities in Schools liaison in schools • African artists residencies • Playing music during morning arrival and using diverse music • Fuel Up program to support students who need food during weekends and holidays • Restorative Justice circles to reduce suspensions • Breakfast in classrooms to promote equality - reduces stigma of some kids eating in the cafeteria • Student focus groups through the equity team
School Focused Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events in the school that are not all academic related to build relationships - bingo night, movie night, family board game night, etc. • Interpreters in every meeting • Purposeful hiring to find diverse staff • Purchase of translation device kits to support 2 way translations for school events • Cultural arts assemblies have a diverse theme • Google classroom articles • Scholastic and CNN current events to share cultural events and world events
Community Focused Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hispanic mom's group • All Pro Dads meetings to promote the involvement of dads in education - specific focus on diverse presenters • Taking curriculum nights into the community - going to local churches, apt complex, trailer parks, neighborhoods, etc. • Moving PTA events to be free events and not all fundraisers to increase access to all families • Website and publications/communications from the school are translated

APPENDIX G: DISTRICT EQUITY TEAM

Equity Team Accomplishments

Topic	Activity
Equity Team Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created the Equity Team, Equity & Excellence for Everyone planning team • Shared the equity team proposal with the Board of Education • Share the equity proposal Principals and Assistant Principals • Established a full Equity Team including multiple stakeholders • Equity Team goals were established • Developed an team website to organize materials and document progress • Created a Community Advisory Committee of community advocates to support the schools • Presented Equity Team’s progress at the NCASCD conference
Professional Development & Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSS training for every school for discipline • Biliteracy training for all ESL teachers and Dual Language teachers with Karen Beeman • All district staff read “Barriers to Good Instruction”, an article about bias in the classroom • Leadership Institute session on leading for equity in schools (2014) • Poverty training for each school team with Eric Jensen • District leadership book study on inequitable grading practices • School teams attended training with Ken O’Connor on equity in grading practices • Self-Paced module for certified staff with article reading called, “Equity Front and Center”
School & Student Focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative Justice program starting in January 2017 with Dispute Settlement Center • District discipline data analysis for every school by subgroup • Addition of a lead psychologist and IPF for behavior to assist with reduction of suspensions • Conducted equity focus groups at each high school • Grading policy reviewed and updated to eliminate inequities in grading across the district • Developed equity grant process for teachers and school groups

Equity Team Next Steps

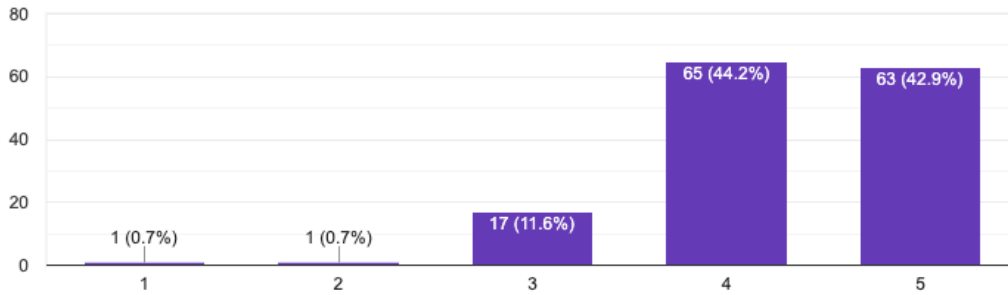
Topic	Activity
Equity Team Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-energize Community Ambassadors• Develop new Equity Strategic Plan or Embed in the District’s new plan• Partnerships with the Hispanic Liaison and the NC Congress of Latino Organizations
Professional Development & Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with Teacher Leaders to develop resources to support the new Social Studies standards• Continue and expand Equity Professional Development across the district• Host an Equity Conference with Nationally recognized presenters and panelists
School & Student Focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replicate and expand opportunities for student focus groups & affinity groups• Require School Improvement Goals and Professional Development Goals related to equity• Begin a district equity assessment with the <i>Equity Collaborative</i>• Offer Equity Summer Camps with <i>“We Are”</i>

APPENDIX H: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE DATA

Questions

1. I make an effort to get to know my students' families and backgrounds.

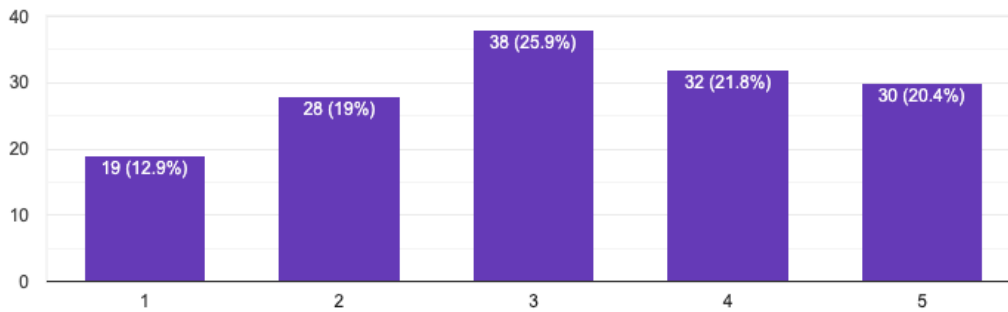
147 responses



2. I use surveys to find out about my students' classroom preferences.



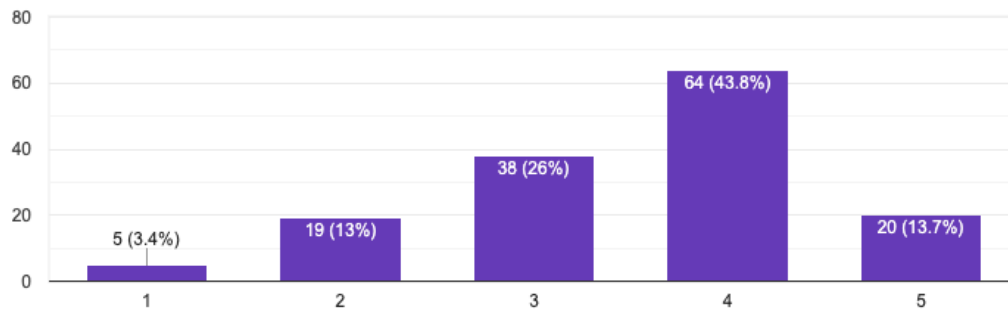
147 responses



3. I elicit students' experiences in pre-reading and pre-listening activities.



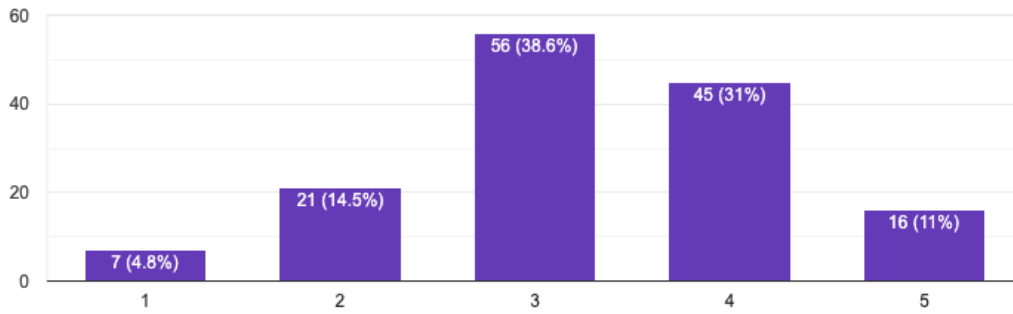
146 responses



4. I have students work independently, selecting their own learning activities.

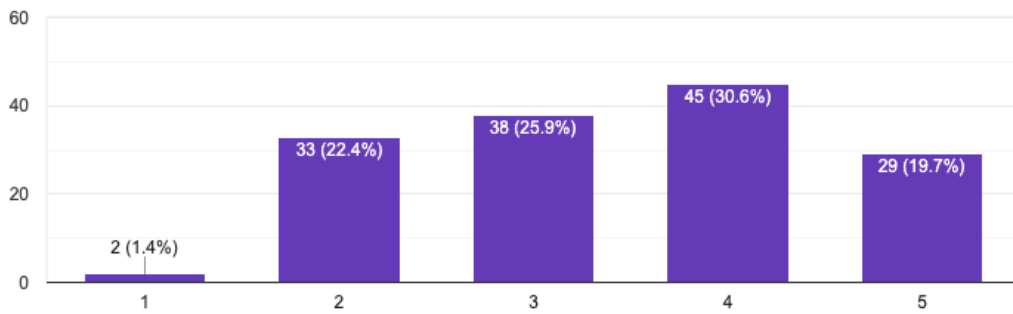


145 responses



5. I spend time outside of class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.

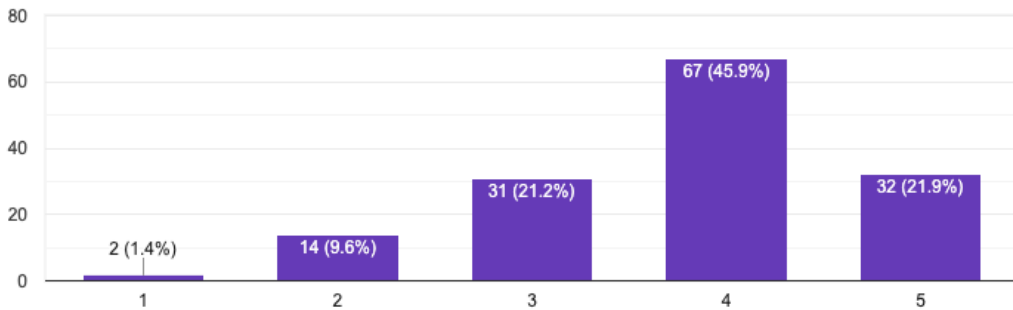
147 responses



6. I supplement the curriculum with lessons about current events.



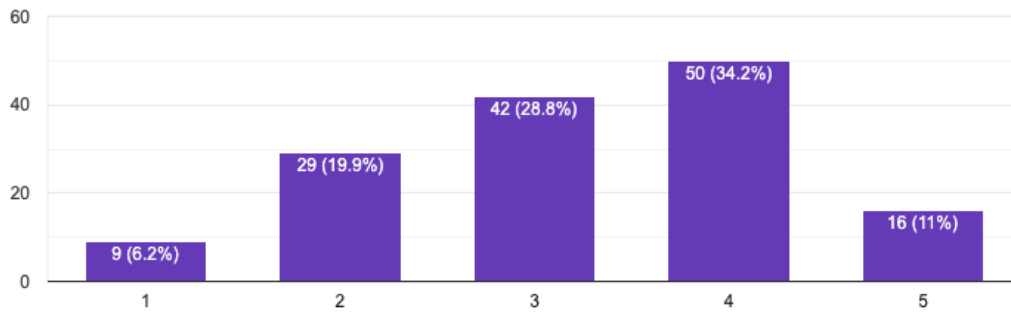
146 responses



7. I ask for student input when planning lessons and activities.

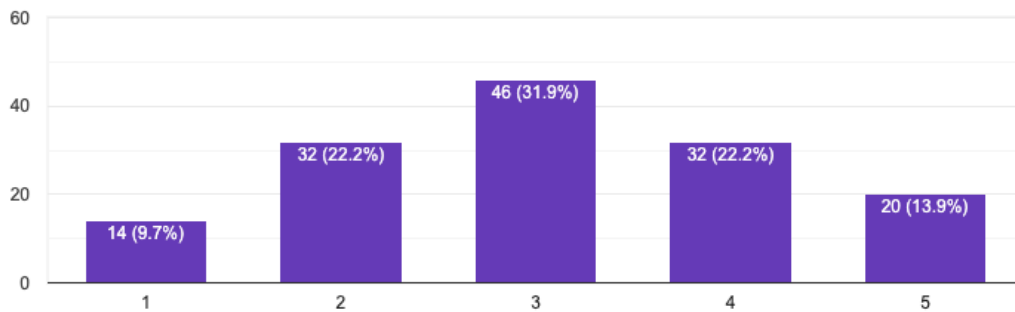


146 responses



8. I encourage students to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.

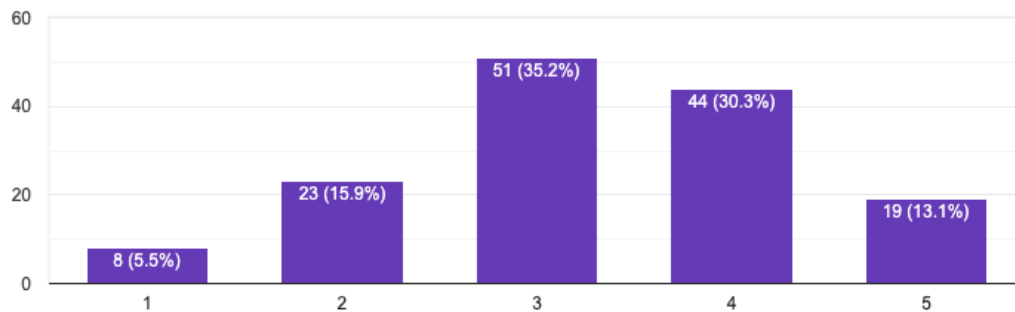
144 responses



9. I review and assess curricula and instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weakness, and relevance to students' interest and instructional needs, and revise them if necessary.

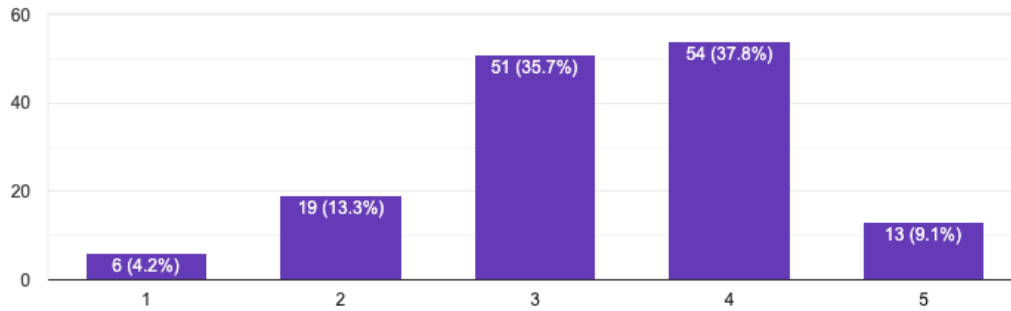


145 responses



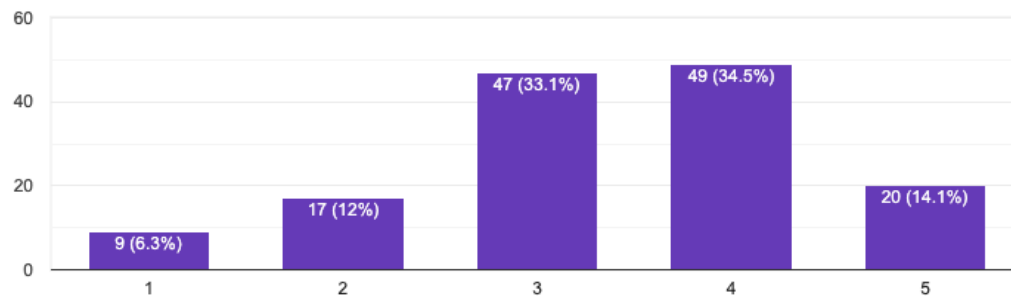
10. I develop a repertoire of instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students to serve as a scaffold for learning.

143 responses



11. I use a variety of assessment techniques, such as self-assessment, portfolios, and so on, to evaluate students' performance in favor of cultural diversity.

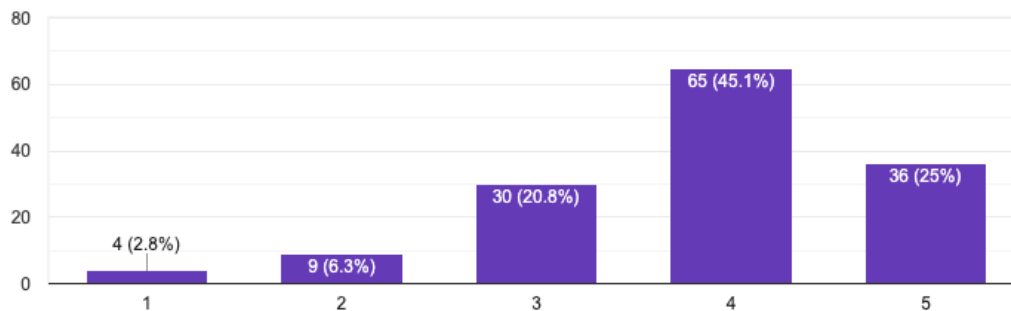
142 responses



12. I utilize a variety of instructional methods to match students' learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining their attention and interest in learning.

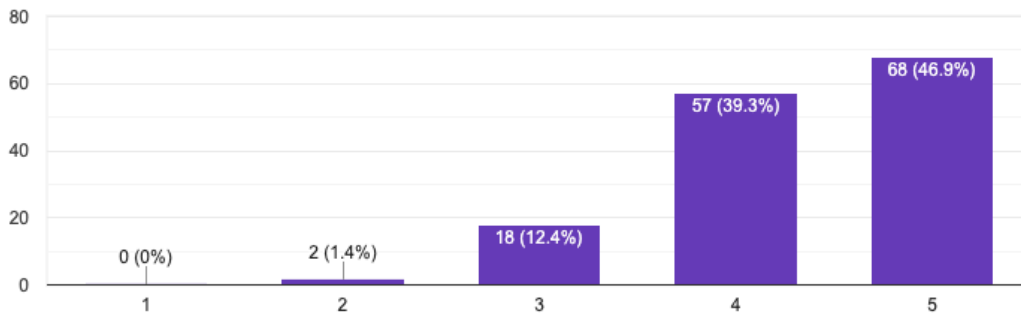


144 responses



13. I communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students.

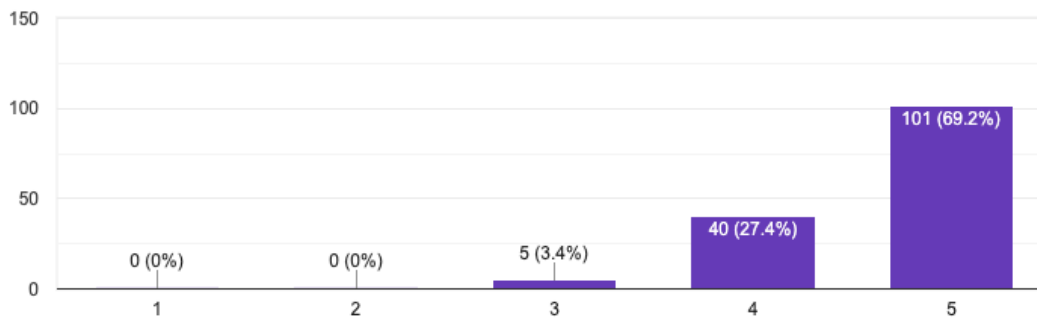
145 responses



14. I develop and maintain positive, meaningful, caring, and trusting relationships with students.



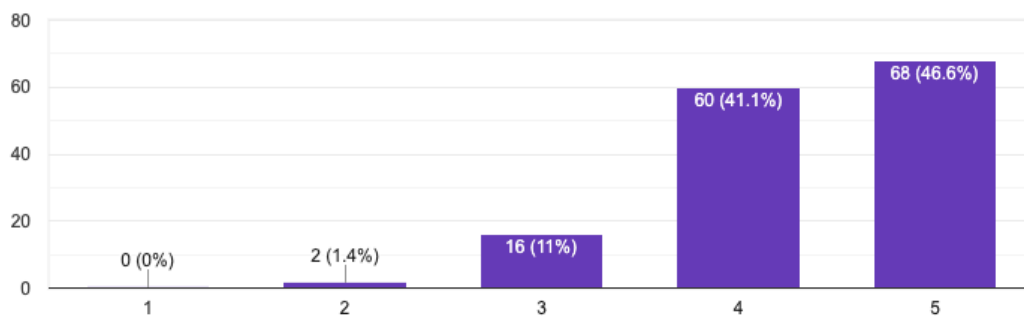
146 responses



15. I create a community of learners by encouraging students to focus on collective work, responsibility, and cooperation.



146 responses

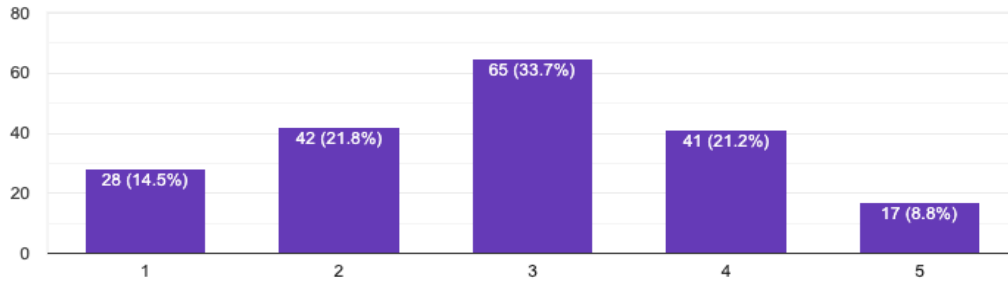


APPENDIX I: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

1. My teachers make an effort to get to know about my family and my background.



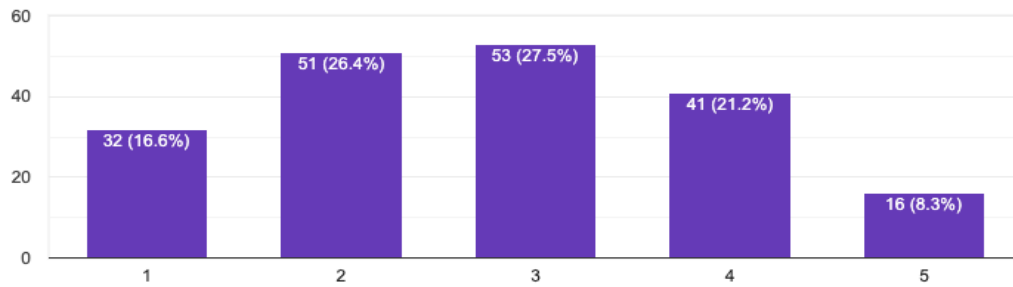
193 responses



2. My teachers use surveys to find out about my classroom preferences.



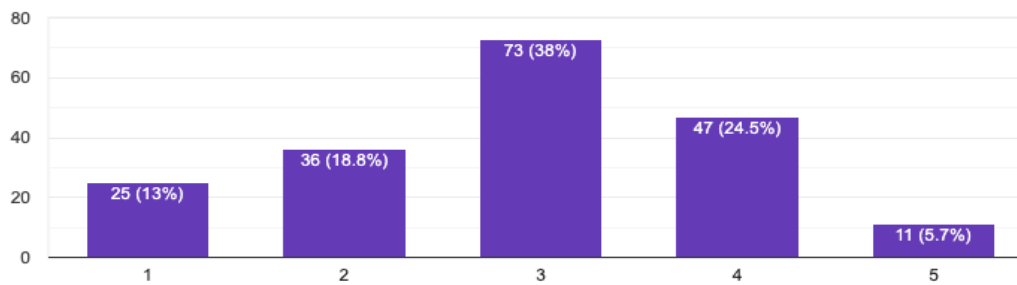
193 responses



3. My teachers ask about my experiences by using pre-reading and pre-listening activities.

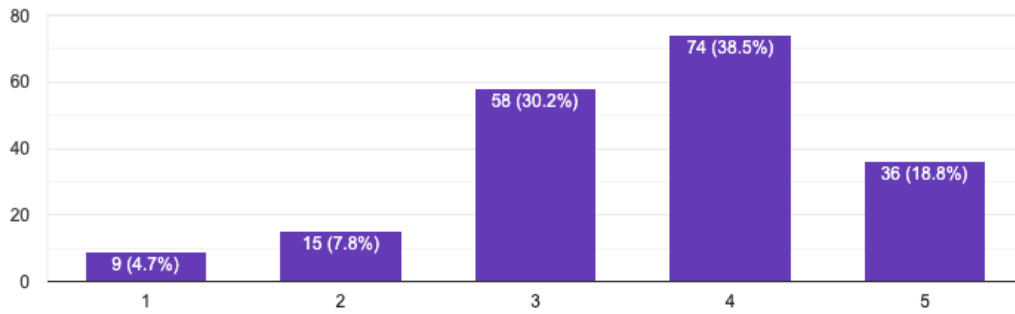


192 responses



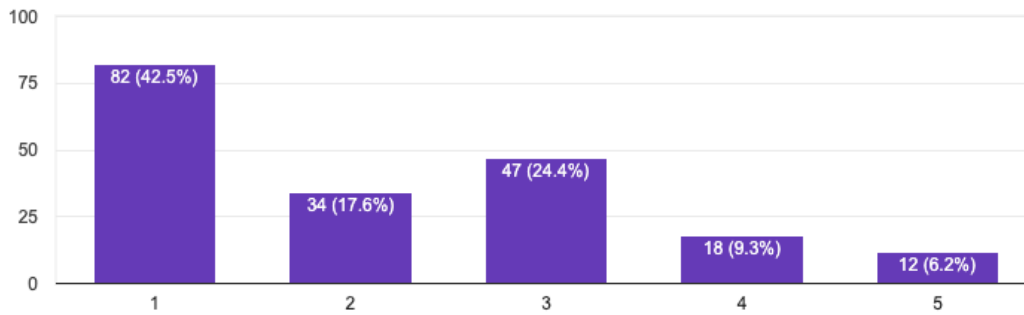
4. In my classes I am allowed to work independently, selecting my own learning activities.

192 responses



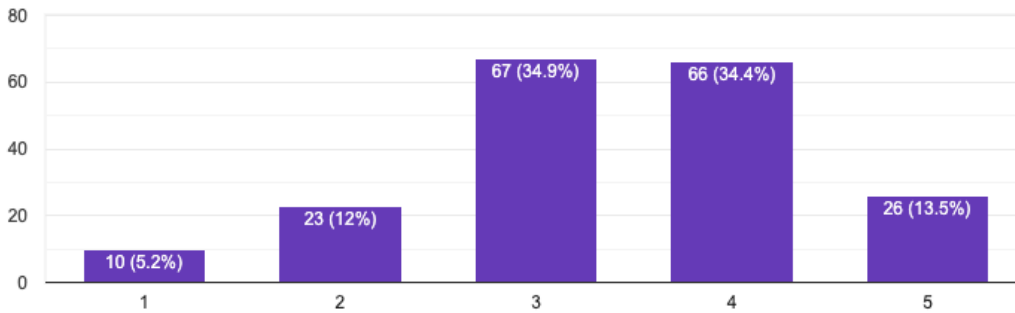
5. My teachers spend time outside of class learning about my culture and the languages I speak.

193 responses



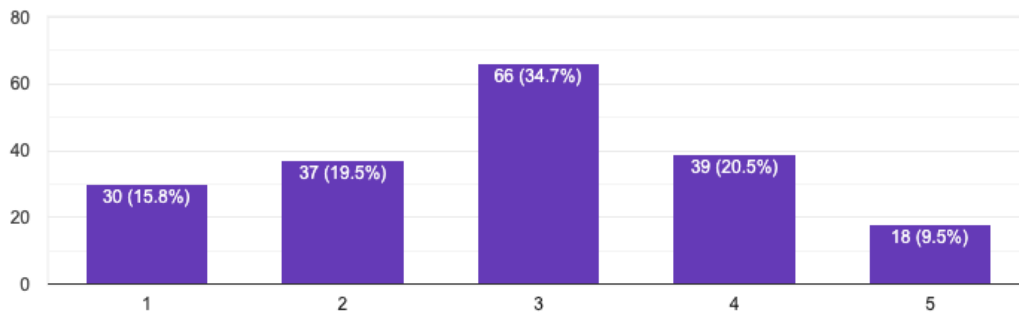
6. My teachers supplement the curriculum with lessons about current events.

192 responses



7. My teachers ask for my input when planning lessons and activities.

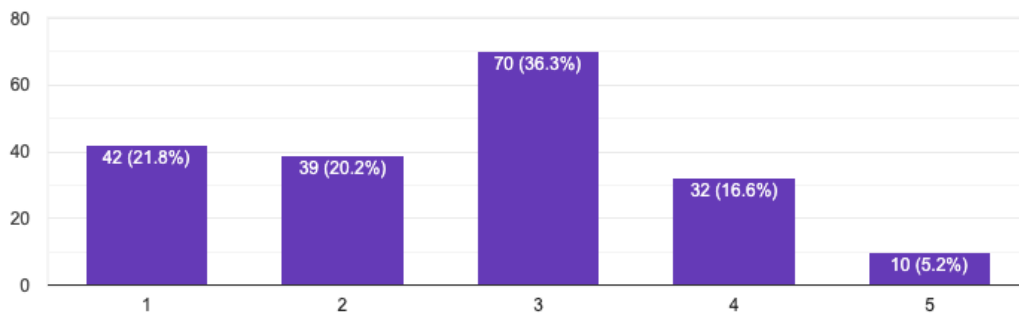
190 responses



8. In my classes, I am encouraged to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.

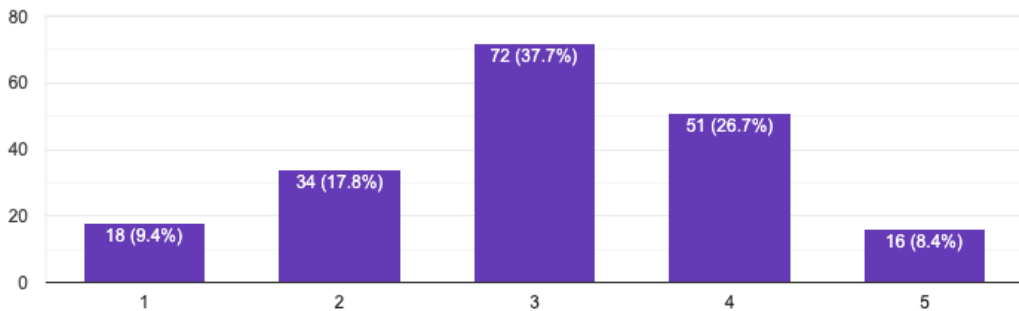


193 responses



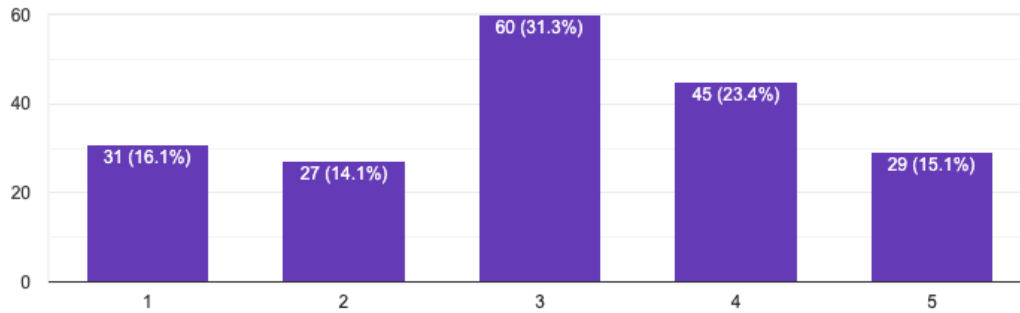
9. The materials my teachers use allow me to learn about diverse perspectives.

191 responses



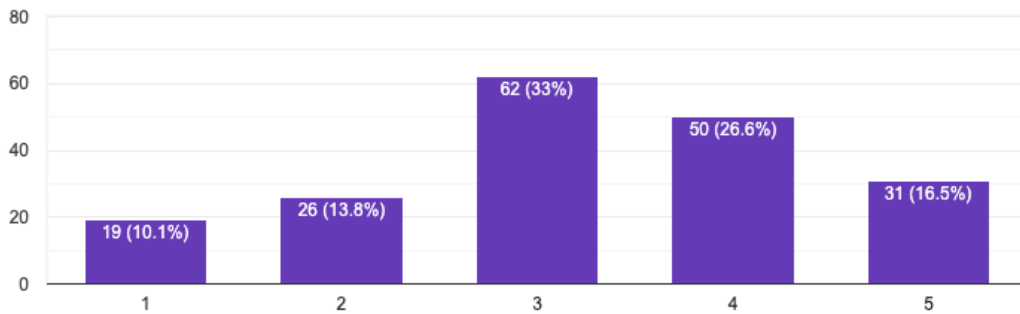
10. I am able to see myself (culturally, racially, ethnically) in the materials my teachers use in the classroom.

192 responses



11. My teachers utilize a variety of instructional methods to match my learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining my attention and interest in learning.

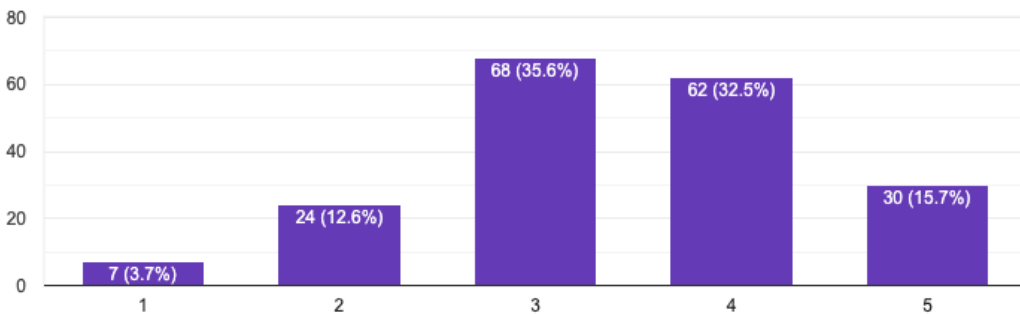
188 responses



12. My teachers regularly communicate messages of academic success to me.

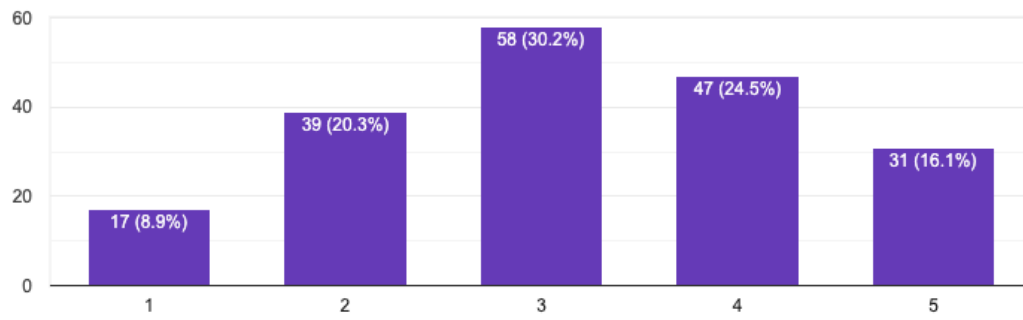


191 responses



13. I have classes where I am able to engage in work that will bring on social change.

192 responses



APPENDIX J: SUBGROUP QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Question	Option	Black Subgroup (totals in %)	Hispanic Subgroup (totals in %)
1			
Teachers get to know families and backgrounds	5 (Always)	0.0	4.0
	4 (Usually)	25.0	14.0
	3 (Sometimes)	31.25	40.0
	2 (Rarely)	18.75	32.0
	1 (Never)	25.0	10.0
2			
Teachers use surveys to identify classroom preference	5 (Always)	12.5	12.0
	4 (Usually)	25.0	32.0
	3 (Sometimes)	31.25	28.0
	2 (Rarely)	18.75	26.0
	1 (Never)	25.0	2.0
3			
Pre-reading & pre-listening activities to learn about experiences	5 (Always)	0.0	6.12
	4 (Usually)	37.5	30.61
	3 (Sometimes)	37.5	36.7
	2 (Rarely)	12.5	20.4
	1 (Never)	12.5	6.1
4			
Allowed to work independently & select learning activities	5 (Always)	37.5	6.1
	4 (Usually)	25.0	63.3
	3 (Sometimes)	25.0	28.6
	2 (Rarely)	12.5	0.0
	1 (Never)	0.0	2.04
5			
Teachers spend time (out of class) learning about my culture	5 (Always)	12.5	2.0
	4 (Usually)	6.25	8.0
	3 (Sometimes)	37.5	32.0
	2 (Rarely)	12.5	24.0
	1 (Never)	31.25	34.0
6			
Teachers use current events to supplement curriculum	5 (Always)	6.25	8.0
	4 (Usually)	25.0	42.0
	3 (Sometimes)	43.75	36.0
	2 (Rarely)	18.75	14.0
	1 (Never)	6.25	0.0
7			
Teachers ask for input when	5 (Always)	12.5	6.12
	4 (Usually)	12.5	28.6

planning	3 (Sometimes)	43.75	40.1
lessons/activities	2 (Rarely)	12.5	12.2
	1 (Never)	18.75	12.2
8			
Cross-cultural comparisons are encouraged	5 (Always)	6.25	4.0
	4 (Usually)	25.0	20.0
	3 (Sometimes)	31.25	36.0
	2 (Rarely)	25.0	22.0
	1 (Never)	12.5	18.0
9			
Diverse perspectives are included in the materials used in class	5 (Always)	6.25	10.2
	4 (Usually)	37.5	30.6
	3 (Sometimes)	37.5	34.7
	2 (Rarely)	12.5	16.3
	1 (Never)	6.25	8.2
10			
I am able to see myself in the materials my teacher uses	5 (Always)	1.0	10.2
	4 (Usually)	25.0	26.5
	3 (Sometimes)	43.75	30.6
	2 (Rarely)	12.5	18.4
	1 (Never)	0.0	14.3
11			
My teacher uses a variety of instructional methods	5 (Always)	6.67	12.2
	4 (Usually)	26.67	28.6
	3 (Sometimes)	46.67	40.8
	2 (Rarely)	20.0	18.4
	1 (Never)	0.0	0.0
12			
My teachers communicate messages of academic success	5 (Always)	6.67	4.0
	4 (Usually)	40.0	38.0
	3 (Sometimes)	40.0	50.0
	2 (Rarely)	13.33	8.0
	1 (Never)	0.0	0.0
13			
I am able to engage in work that will bring social change	5 (Always)	25.0	12.2
	4 (Usually)	31.25	34.7
	3 (Sometimes)	31.25	24.5
	2 (Rarely)	12.5	22.4
	1 (Never)	0.0	6.1

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