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DISRUPTING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE: USING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS

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DISRUPTING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE: USING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS

The school-to-prison pipeline is a social phenomenon in which students become formally involved with the criminal justice system due to behavior issues being addressed with law enforcement consequences rather than school-imposed consequences (Owens, 2017). Zero-tolerance policies of exclusionary practices encourage school failure which begins to foster an experience of incarceration (Wilson, 2014). Black students are three and a half times more likely than White students to be excluded from school due to disciplinary issues and are twice as likely as their White peers to drop out of school (Cramer et al., 2014). Exclusionary discipline practices encourage school dropout (Suh et al., 2014). Cramer et al. (2014) documented the presence of relationships between school dropout and incarceration rates. They established that students who had arrest records prior to age 16 had a 27% decreased graduation rate and were 26% more likely to become incarcerated into adulthood.

Exclusionary discipline practices encourage school dropout (Suh et al., 2014). Cramer et al. (2014) documented the presence of relationships between school dropout and incarceration rates. They established that students who had arrest records prior to age 16 had a 27% decreased graduation rate and were 26% more likely to become incarcerated into adulthood. The discipline gap between Black and White students has increased the demand for teacher training and support in culturally responsive and behavior practices (Larson et al., 2018). The onset of culturally responsive practices occurred because of racist instructional operations which did not account for the diverse experiences students of color contributed to the classroom (Harmon, 2012). Culturally

responsive practices are socially just responses for redefining, reframing, and reconceptualizing deficit perceptions of students of color (Matais, 2018). Culturally responsive practices may contribute to student engagement (Losen, 2011). As student engagement increases, behavior decreases. Accordingly, increases in student engagement would ultimately void the need for suspension and expulsion (Losen, 2011), both of which contribute to the school to prison pipeline.

The Problem

Exclusionary school policies and practices including zero tolerance, suspension, and expulsion are all systems which have encouraged racial disparities in the criminal justice system (Owens, 2015). As Black students continue to be affected by institutional policies which follow a White norm, it excludes the interactional styles and practices of those individuals who are non-White (Milner, 2013) which subjects Black students to harsh discipline that leads to the potential future of incarceration (Wilson, 2014).

Teachers and administrators present a heightened fear of Black students and may be less supportive of keeping them in the classroom (Milner, 2013). Milner (2013) determined that Black students are more likely than White students to receive discipline referrals which originate in the classroom. Unfortunately, students' achievement is impaired when they are removed from the academic setting (Milner, 2013) which then fulfills the pessimism predicted of their lack of achievement (Skiba, 2014). Teacher preparation programs continue are ill prepared and many do not address classroom management or practices to support students of color (Milner, 2013). The implementation of culturally responsive practices may reduce inappropriate and unnecessary discipline referrals (Dray & Wisneski, 2011) while supporting students' ability to view diversity as

a strength and not a weakness (Quigley, 2014). Culturally responsive practices can also support educators' understanding of the unique abilities and untapped assets in students of color while encouraging a more appropriate response to their behavior (Quigley, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

Culturally responsive practices embody cultural, political, and professional ideology which displaces monotonous teaching but focuses on student growth (Howard & Terry, 2011). Culturally responsive practices in classrooms recognize the cultural wealth, knowledge and skills diverse students contribute to schools (Howard & Terry, 2011). The implementation of culturally responsive practices avoids teacher centered instructional practices and encourages a student-centered approach that can grow learners of color (Shevalier & McKenzie (2012). Teachers should understand the intricacies of this construct as it relates to learning, teaching, the individual student, their families, their communities, and the commitment to student achievement as a reality (Howard & Terry, 2011). Howard and Terry (2011) contended five principles were present that support culturally responsive practices:

- eradicating the deficit-based ideologies related to students of color

- disrupting the idea that Eurocentric forms of knowledge, language, and culture are the norm

- critical consciousness and sociopolitical awareness which reflect a commitment to challenge the injustice and disrupt the inequities and oppression of any group of people

- authentic and culturally informed compassion for students in which their academic, social, emotional, psychological, and cultural well-being are promoted

- recognizing the complexity of culture wherein educators allow students own culture to be used to support their quest for educational excellence.

When culturally responsive practices are implemented with fidelity, teachers believe students can reach their potential, they demonstrate high expectations for all learners, and they communicate clear and specific expectations surrounding their students' learning and create classrooms which promote a genuine respect for students and belief in their abilities (Aceves & Orosco, 2014). Samuels (2018) contended that to realize the maximum benefit of culturally responsiveness, teachers must extend practices beyond theory and adopt this framework into daily practices and interactions.

Purpose

The purpose of conducting this research study is to determine if the consistent implementation of culturally responsive classroom practices could affect the disruption of the school to prison pipeline. The research questions which guided this study are:

1. What classroom practices are implemented to support the diverse needs of Black students?

2. What classroom structures are implemented to avoid racial biases within classroom disciplinary practices?

3. What non-punitive disciplinary practices address behavioral concerns in Black students?

Review of the Literature

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching centers on the premise students learn and achieve at high levels when the instructional delivery is content situated within their own

individual perspectives and experiences (Kesler, 2011). Culturally responsive teaching, often referred to as culturally responsive pedagogy, is a method or practice that when implemented in the classroom, supports the academic achievement of students of color (Cramer et al., 2014). Culturally responsive teaching is critical for optimal instructional practices (Epstein et al., 2011). Black students show growth because their instructors are grounded in pedagogical practices, relationships, and curriculum and help students understand their role as a change agent in society (Bassey, 2016). Culturally responsive teaching is student centered and recognizes the significance of a student's cultural background and the various components of learning (Samuels, 2018). The instructor should strive to have a culturally pluralistic classroom which reflects a tone, environment, and interactions conducive to meet the individual learning styles of diverse students (Cramer et al., 2014).

According to Bassey (2016) Black students perform better when teaching is filtered through their own experiences. When culturally responsive teaching is adequately provided, teachers implement a specified framework (Cramer et al., 2014). The teachers work to learn about the lives of their students, have affirming views, demonstrate cultural care, build a positive learning community, provide opportunities for cross-cultural communication, promote equity and inclusivity, and build upon student prior knowledge (Kesler, 2011).

Student-Teacher Relationships

Larson et al. (2018) stated that because discipline continues to be at the core of the poor academic achievement of Black students, an increased demand exists for teacher training in culturally responsive and behavior management practices. Researchers have

noted the presence of significant relationships between lack of positive relationships between teachers and students of color and classroom behavior issues (Losen, 2011). When students are disengaged, it increases the likelihood for classroom disruption and ultimately suspension or expulsion (Losen, 2011). When culturally responsive practices occur in the classrooms, it fosters positive relationships.

However, teachers are not the sole proprietors of this issue. Exclusionary practices occur with state, local, district, and campus leadership policies that encourage Black students to be served in settings outside general education based solely on behavior (Milner, 2013). Educational theorists concerned with anti-racist and multicultural practices, discovered teachers must begin changing the process of social exclusion with students of color (Mogadime, 2011). For example, Allen and White-Smith (2014) established the presence of policies and practices that directly affect students of color. The outcome of these policies may include, but are not limited to, how Black boys are punished more excessively and denied opportunities to learn. Harmon (2012) determined that the lack of cultural synchronization between teachers and Black students has negative effects on achievement.

Racial Biases in the Classroom

One of the greatest detriments to students of color is racial bias (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Riddle and Sinclair (2019) contended that teachers tend to view the same behavior seen in White students as a more long-term detriment and deserving of more stringent consequences when exhibited by Black students. Psychological evaluations have revealed racial biases occur based on self-reporting of the general attitude toward racial groups or through implicit biases (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Essentially, the system

of education begins to support, and encourage, the failure of Black students by the age of eight (Mogadime, 2011). To divert from these practices, and support the learning of Black students, educators must examine how their social and racial constructs shape themselves (Mogadime, 2011). Carter et al. (2017) revealed as racial disparities continue to plague the classrooms, the graduation stages become more void of Black students while the incarceration rate for people of color continues to grow. Regrettably, the disparities demonstrated by teachers toward Black students are a consequence of United States history (Carter et al., 2014). Students intrinsically desire fair and equal treatment from their teacher regardless of their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic class (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012). However, White teachers evaluate Black students' behavior and academic abilities more negatively as compared to White students (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012). When Black students experience highly punitive consequences for not following school expectations, the outcomes may be detrimental.

Strong divisive practices and racialized historical concepts are factors which contribute to classrooms in the US (Carter et al., 2014). Most disadvantaged schools are populated by students of color (Carter et al., 2014). Due to the ongoing reluctance to discuss issues related to race, Black students continue to be marginalized in US classrooms. However, American history has fostered ongoing ideals which are exclusionary and affect daily classroom interactions. To terminate the disparities Black students, face in the classroom, constructive dialogue and learning is required. Carter et al. (2014) emphasized research findings which highlighted the discriminatory practices demonstrated in the classroom which negatively affect students of color. Implicit bias, microaggression, and the reluctance to engage in fluid dialogue regarding differences

make learning difficult for students of color. Riddle and Sinclair (2019) discovered punitive disciplinary actions which target Black students put them at greater long-term risks. Researchers have documented 32 million students at nearly 96,000 schools have experienced the use of disciplinary measures directly related to racial biases (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Bias teachers and administrators often make disciplinary decisions that are unfavorable to Black students. This situation leads to greater learning gaps and students of color continue to receive inequitable education (Colgren & Sappington, 2015).

Colgren and Sappington (2015) contended that closing the gaps in achievement and discipline requires educators to acknowledge students of color are marginalized because of traditional education. Teachers must remove their judgment of students based on cultural formations and begin to challenge the traditional curriculum and favor a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach. Educators who are culturally competent recognize the connection between culture and learning. These educators void their personal biases and are committed to equitable educational practices for all students. Teachers who elect to incorporate cultural inclinations in their classrooms for students who have been marginalized under the traditional curriculum find students are more engaged (Colgren & Sappington, 2015). This incorporation of cultural inclinations may cause a reduction in disruptive behavior and thus vacating the need to seek disciplinary action that could be more punitive for Black students based on racial biases. The mismatch experienced between teachers and Black students is rooted in racial stereotypes present (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012). Unfortunately, the lack of culturally responsive practices in K-12 classrooms stems from the disinterest with culture many teachers have

(Larson et al., 2018). White teachers have higher expectations for students with White sounding names and believe Black students have less potential (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012). When this phenomenon becomes standard practice in classrooms, teacher bias is evident and Black students suffer the consequences that may ensue.

Research Design

This qualitative study was used to determine what culturally responsive classroom practices are being implemented by teachers to address behavioral concerns in Black students to avoid the use of exclusionary practices. A purposeful sampling of educators was selected from five school districts in southeast Texas and met specific criteria. The educators: (a) had experience working in schools with a diverse population of students including ethnic/cultural backgrounds; (b) had experience working with students who are of low socioeconomic status (SES); (c) had experience in classrooms with a combination of students who are White middle class and Black low SES and (d) had experience working with students who have demonstrated classroom disciplinary concerns. The researcher used information from the School Report Card of the campuses selected to determine student demographics which supports the educators meeting the researcher's criteria. See Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1.

Student Demographics.

	District 1-A	District 2-B	District 3-C	District 4-D	District 5-E
Total	805	647	1040	1102	431
Black	13.8%	14%	34%	31%	84%

White	39.9%	8%	13%	6%	4%
Hispanic	38.4%	77%	45%	54%	12%
Other	7.9%	1%	8%	9%	0%

Participating educators ranged from various ethnic backgrounds and various years of classroom teaching experience. The teachers selected taught Grades 3-8. Also included in the study were educators who served in the General Education, Special Education, and Bilingual Education programs. The experience of teachers who participated in the study ranged from 4-28 years. Educators had also served in varied capacities classroom teacher, instructional interventionists, and instructional specialists.

Qualitative data were collected with a case study approach. Teachers were asked to complete a 13-question survey and participate in voluntary interviews.

The research questions which guided this study are:

1. What classroom practices are implemented to support the diverse needs of Black students?

2. What classroom structures are implemented to avoid racial biases within classroom disciplinary practices?

3. What non-punitive disciplinary practices address behavioral concerns in Black students?

The researcher conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis to allow an examination of the data to obtain a general understanding, transmit ideas in writing, ponder the organization of the data, and consider the need for more data collection (Creswell, 2018). Following the preliminary exploratory analysis, the researcher coded

segments of the data. The coding process made sense of the data collected, allowed for the division of the text into segments, examined the data for overlaps, and ultimately synthesized codes into themes (Creswell, 2018).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the knowledge base of educators regarding the implementation of culturally responsive classroom practices. This study was also conducted to determine if the consistent application of culturally responsive classroom practices could affect the disruption of the school to prison pipeline. An intentional sampling of educators was selected based on the diverse population of students served in their classes. See Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1.

Study Participants.

	P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6	P-7	P-8	P-9	P-10
Years	22	10	21	10	11	19	8	17	20	4
Race	Black	White	Hispanic	Black	White	Black	Black	White	Black	White
Grade	4th	5th	5th	3rd	6th	6th	3rd	7th	8th	5th
School	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I	Title I

Research Question One

Research question one *What classroom practices are implemented to support the diverse needs of Black students?* The major themes revealed from these sources of data were *rapport building and concise expectations.*

Rapport Building with Students

Building relationships with students and making connections was the first major theme uncovered. Participants articulated the significance of teachers talking to their students regarding their likes and dislikes, things they are involved in on weekends, their family, and their future. Educators believed when students understood there was encouragement and support from their teachers, it would promote their ability to achieve at high levels both academically and socially and reduce the likelihood of demonstrating behavior that may cause severe consequences.

Participant one stated, "building a rapport with students is the best classroom practices to support diverse learners." Participant two asserted, "I feel the number one strategy a teacher or staff member can do to help address disruptive behavior is to establish and maintain a relationship with students. Students don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." Participant three stated, "Number one at all times is finding a way to connect with the student. In many cases, that connection, once made, gains the appreciation and respect of the student and they are better able to self-correct or respond well to redirection."

Consistent and Concise Expectations

Teachers interviewed saw value in ensuring expectations were clear and concise. It was also important that students take ownership of their expectations. Participant four said, "I let students help create rules and create classroom presentation standards." Participant five asserted, "I implement classroom contracts that students

sign." Participant six stated, "Students know what my expectations are, and know what will and will not be tolerated in the classroom because of consistent practices."

Limited Familial Support

From the major theme of relationship building garnered subthemes of the *need for more familial support* and *more guidance through campus and district based professional training to support diverse learners*. It was evident teachers desired to do what was best to support all students served, however many expressed the lack of support from parents as well as minimal professional tools and skillset in which to do so.

When asked about the greatest challenges to supporting diverse learners, Participant seven stated, "Um, parental involvement and all communication. A lot of times the parents don't get involved. They don't answer the phone, or they switch numbers so many, multiple times, I had one just the other day that can't get in touch with the mama. Just lack of support." Participant eight said, "Parental involvement is one thing for sure. There's just not a huge emphasis on education. The emphasis is on survival, you know, and so there's just not enough room to focus on those types of things."

Lack of Professional Training from District/Campus Administration

It is evident, teachers viewed another detriment to implementing practices that support the diverse needs of Black students as the lack of support from the school leadership community. The subtheme generated based on those responses was a lack of guidance through professional development.

When participants were asked about trainings and professional development at both the campus and district level to support understanding the unique needs of diverse learners, Participant nine stated, "No. I have had only one training I've been to in the last

19 years. Participant five, a teacher who has worked at the same Title I school for the last 6 years, and has been in education for 11 years stated, "You know I thought about this. I think we've had one PD; I think we had some staff developments about the differences … but other than that, I would have to say no."

Participant eight again stated, "There was a huge verbal push for diversification. We had…a keynote speaker at one of our assemblies pre COVID. He stood there and he spoke so much truth … we thought that there would be more trainings to follow … And there was nothing." These responses indicate teachers are inadequately trained by their campuses and districts to effectively implement classroom practices that support the diverse needs of Black students.

Summary of Research Question One

Teachers overwhelmingly acknowledged the importance of building relationships with the learners served and providing concise expectations to support the diverse needs of Black students. Teachers shared when relationships are fostered it supports students' belief that they are valued and have instructors whose purpose is to ensure they achieve at high levels. Teachers also shared the significance of receiving support from students' families and administration to assist in the areas where they show deficits. Teachers desired to connect with families to be enlightened to information outside of school surrounding their students which could explain some of the behavior that may be demonstrated in class. Teachers also continue to seek guidance from the administration, both at the campus and district level, to learn more consistent practices to continue to support diverse learners.

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Research Question Two

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Research question two *What classroom structures are implemented to avoid racial biases within classroom disciplinary practices*? The major themes revealed were *need for clear systems* and *lack of knowledge*.

Clear Campus/Classroom Systems

The implementation of discipline management systems was the first theme from research question two. Overwhelmingly, teachers agreed learning and understanding how to implement discipline systems that are supportive reduces the likelihood of bias and exclusionary practices.

Teachers continued to express how consistency and having practices that students shared responsibility in creating and were held accountable for positive behavior management. Participant four said, "I like to include students on [creating] rules and discussions when it comes to how we should include everybody in class? Giving students options and choices and letting them make decisions has really helped a lot because now they feel like …I'm including them." Participant nine said, "The state of the campus is and has been very unsafe for years. There have been no systems implemented to frontload behavior concerns that data has shown is and will be an issue. What we are seeing right now is lots of non-compliance and nothing to address it in a supportive way. So, kids are receiving referrals, being suspended, or [being] sent to an alternative school. We are operating a school that is just, just zero tolerance for behavior."

Many of the teachers interviewed saw value in implementing specific practices which encourage positive relationships and could reduce behavioral issues in the classroom. It was evident they viewed connecting with students as a tool to utilize behavior management practices which are universal and does not target a specific group

of students. Participant six said, "I believe in just being there for them when they need me the most. I think building that relationship with them, making it feel safe and secure. This reduces behavior in my class because they know I really love and care for them." Participant five said. "I think seeing them outside of school where they can shine, like maybe there's a struggle in school, but man, maybe they are proud they can play football or basketball or whatever. Um, I make a point to go see them. I make a point to talk to their parents. I want their parents to see who I am. I want to build a relationship with the parents as well as the kid."

Limited Knowledge of Best Practices

One of the most obvious detriments to the efficacy of teacher's classroom practices as it relates to structures that are inclusive and do not marginalize a particular group of students was the lack of knowledge of inclusive practices. Many teachers did not understand culturally responsive classroom practices or provided surface level responses of the implementation of culturally responsive practices. Participant three responded, "I am guessing that that means being aware of different cultures." Participant two stated, "I think one it's relationships with kids, what culture, they are also learning about those different cultures to be able to relate to that kid." Participant ten responded, "I read a whole book on it, and I don't fully understand what that means exactly." Of the ten teachers who completed questionnaires and the seven interviewed, one teacher gave a more fluid perception of culturally responsive practices as it relates to inclusivity in the classroom to avoid racial biases with discipline.

Summary of Research Question Two

The researcher determined teachers rely on classroom operational systems to avoid racial biases in the classroom. Overwhelmingly, educators are working toward positive behavior support programs to encourage more appropriate behavior and interactions as opposed to punitive practices which tend to marginalize students of color. However, because a lack of knowledge of proactive practices continues to be present and best practices to respond effectively to disruptive behavior, some teachers and campuses continue to enforce zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline procedures. Teachers had an unclear understanding of the school to prison pipeline and therefore had little to no knowledge of this historical issue that continues to persist in education. Educators also shared since there are limited training offered by their school districts surrounding culturally responsive practices, it causes challenges with implementing this practice in the classroom. While most educators preferred to avoid being punitive with classroom discipline practices, they were untrained and lacked knowledge of supportive approaches which would not marginalize students of color. The limited knowledge of educators surrounding culturally responsive practices continues to foster an atmosphere of exclusionary practices for school-aged students of color.

Research Question 3

Research question four *"What non-punitive discipline practices address behavioral concerns in Black students?"* The main themes were *limited knowledge and time*. A subtheme of *resources* also appeared within some of the participants' responses.

Limited Knowledge

To answer research question three, the participants were asked a series of questions to support the researcher's knowledge of teachers understanding of discipline

practices which may lead to exclusionary behavior. The researcher also provided participants with research-based information surrounding the school to prison pipeline to front load the line of questioning being asked. However, when the researcher asked the participants to share their knowledge of the school to prison pipeline, it became apparent to the researcher there was very limited knowledge by all participants.

Participant three stated, "I honestly don't know anything about that. I know what you mean when you say that. But I just try to keep them from dropping out here. You've got to finish school, motivate them, start putting ideas in their heads now about going to college or finding a skill they want to grow in and finding a mentor and try to put ideas in their heads, getting them to believe in this stuff now so that they don't drop out." Participant seven responded, "I know that typically it mostly affects black and brown. In my own words it's basically just the reality that a lot of kids, end up in school to prison. Participant nine sated, "Yes, I do. I mean I think that [it] is a metaphor? Not necessarily a reality." When the educator who has served students in the same Title I campus for the past 4 years was asked about the school to prison pipeline, she responded, "From what I've gathered, it's like certain students, basically go from school and then they're not as successful as they would've hoped or whatever. And then they are running around the streets and eventually pretty much ended up in prison. From the documentaries and books and stuff that I've read … I don't want to say a problem, but like it's their culture sometimes. And so, you can still live life and be successful doing the things that are causing them to be in prison."

Of the ten participants interviewed, one could provide some articulation as to the practices surrounding the school to prison pipeline. Participant four responded, "Well, I

read about it a long time ago and there were some policies about it, from my understanding, it's ensuring that we're not just writing kids up, sending them to alternative school where they end up going into prison because the adults probably didn't do their part." It was evident to the researcher teachers who are serving students in vulnerable situations lack the knowledge needed to adequately support their growth as individuals to aid in disrupting the difficult situations which may be on the horizon.

Time Constraints

When teachers were asked about engaging student's families to support discipline management, it was evident time became an obstacle which interfered with consistent practice. Participant two responded, "Unfortunately, establishing contact with families can be difficult as time can sometimes get away from you, and you just start doing other things. But it has always been my goal to make those relationships happen because it helps when there are issues in class. They want someone who is transparent and just being truthful." Participant four stated, "It's been tough because some minority families just didn't get involved at all. And I can somewhat understand the work issue, having to work during hours that we would want to contact parents. They just don't have the time."

Participant seven found, "Um, I've not really had that much success this year with parent involvement, but it's not just this year. I have had little to no success in connecting with parents. I've had little support with that, but it isn't a priority when a mom must work multiple jobs for survival. Teachers appear to make the effort to build the familial connection required to support students with classroom behavioral practices, however circumstances surrounding time for both parents and teachers inhibits consistency.

Summary of Research Question Three

Unfortunately, a deficit continues to exist with educators' comprehension of the severity of adopting exclusionary practices to address disruptive or disciplinary concerns in students of color. Of the teachers interviewed, 93% had limited to no knowledge of the school-to-prison pipeline and how this phenomenon disproportionately affects students of color. Because of this lack of knowledge, it may be difficult to realize the urgency of learning to implement practices that are culturally responsive consistently for the ability to alter the trajectory of some students. One of the greatest detriments educators shared was the lack of time to grow their knowledge base. While the overwhelming majority expressed the importance of including families in the classroom behavior structures, time became an obstacle for this to be accomplished.

Implications

Teachers may benefit from this study by learning the underlying issue which disproportionately impact students of color and the research-based approach to avoid practices that have become commonplace. Understanding the literature and the outcome of this study may support a teacher's perceptions of how best to respond academically and socially to diverse students in their classroom. It could also highlight the significance of comprehending the cultural differences represented among students and the effects of inclusive practices to reduce unintentional malignment of a particular group.

Practitioners should act to seek resources, attend trainings, and collaborate with administrators and colleagues to better understand the foundation of culturally responsive practices and how this system can be used to dismantle the construct of the school to prison pipeline. As educators work to take action to comprehend the components of culturally responsive practices and its fundamental components, teachers should begin to

consistently filter this construct in their daily interactions with students to encourage a more inclusive school experience for all learners and utilize instructional, social, and discipline practices which are differentiated for the individual needs of diverse students.

Conclusions

Teachers exert effort to build and foster relationships with students, provide concise classroom expectations, allow student input to the expectations of the classroom, encourage collaboration with peers, implement systems for universal discipline practices, and incorporate student's interest in the classroom. Unfortunately, many participants interviewed were unclear as to the foundation of culturally responsive practices and how to implement them daily. While building relationships and connecting with students is a critical aspect to gaining student's trust, there are additional components required to support students of color connectedness with the classroom construct. Regrettably, many teachers were unable to speak to the culturally responsive practices present in the literature as tools to disrupt the school to prison pipeline. It was discovered that 93% of teachers interviewed were unclear as to the meaning of the school to prison pipeline.

What the researcher determined was that teachers have the desire to do what is in the best interest of students served. They want to implement best practices which can reach all learners emotionally. However, because of a lack of trainings, little guidance from administration, time constraints, and limited teacher knowledge, incorporating practices which are more inclusive to diverse learners is difficult. While many teachers interviewed expressed there are cultural differences with the students served, they were not completely certain as to how to respond effectively to the unique needs of their diverse students.

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