HOW CAN SCHOOL LEADERS SUPPORT TEACHERS IN BECOMING CULTURALLY PROFICIENT? LESSONS FROM TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS THAT SUPPORT CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING PRACTICES

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How Can School Leaders Support Teachers in Becoming Culturally Proficient?

Lessons from Teachers and School Leaders that Support

Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

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Educational Leadership Program

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How Can School Leaders Support Teachers in Becoming Culturally Proficient?

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Abstract

This study was a program evaluation of educator cultural proficiency in a suburban school district in Illinois from 2019-2020. The primary research question explored was how school leaders can support teachers to become culturally proficient in order to support underserved students. Employing a qualitative research methodology, with data gathered from school leader and teacher interviews, and document analysis, this study identified key components to improve culturally proficient practices. Policy implications and recommendations highlight the following: ensure that all staff members examine and eliminate institutional beliefs, policies, practices, and teaching that perpetuate racial inequalities; implement culturally relevant practices; and prepare all students to succeed in a multicultural and global society with ongoing professional development.
Preface

This program evaluation has further grounded my passion and dedication in implementing and requiring culturally responsive pedagogy and practices within the educational system. Inequitable practices and opportunities have been enabled for far too long. Transforming teacher practice requires ongoing support, accountability, and collective responsibility within a school system to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a culture of inclusive learning for students and adults. In order to create a culture of learning for all, the creation of shared vision and common framework is necessary and correlates with a system for purposeful collaboration. Teachers feeling empowered through meaningful relationships and professional development with colleagues opens doors to reflecting and analyzing the instructional practices within the framework, which leads to changes in instructional practices and beliefs to improve academic and social emotional learning (SEL).

Equity policies are ever-evolving, yet the need for them is more critical than ever to combat the opportunity gap and systemic racism that have plagued the current culture, competencies, conditions, and context. School and district leaders must take initiative to identify how equitable practices and policies will be implemented. The protocols and procedures for implementation will require leaders to prioritize the needs of students and teachers first in order to create an equitable and inclusive school environment. The teachers and school leaders participating in this program evaluation are grounded in their core beliefs to consistently improve their practice as reflective educators who maintain students’ needs at the heart of everything they do. Listening to their stories was an honor.
and their willingness to be honest and vulnerable was admirable and humbling.

Transforming our educational system to be inclusive and equitable is what schools, districts, and policy makers must consider when seeking to implement culturally responsive pedagogy and practices in order to improve learning for all students.
Acknowledgements

I knew that embarking on this journey would require hard work, dedication, resilience, and a lot of support. I also recognize that I am doing this work not for me, but for every child I have taught and every teacher I have led. They deserve the best of me, and they deserve the best the world can give them.

I sincerely thank my chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson, who has supported me since the first day of our educational leadership doctoral cohort. He has provided me guidance and perspective throughout the various stages of my research and empowered me to continue this work during my highs and my lows.

I also want to thank each of the professors who gave their time, expertise, and support through each part of this process regardless if they were my direct instructor or not.

Next, I would like to sincerely thank my administrative team. I have been blessed to have worked with leaders who truly model and encourage what transformational leadership encompasses. They have challenged me, pushed me, empowered and modeled for me what truly exceptional and selfless leadership resembles. I sincerely believe I would not be here today without them.

Lastly, words cannot express my gratitude to my family. My husband, Jose, who has always believed and pushed me to pursue my dreams. My children, Janelle, Nathan, and Nicholas, who so gracefully accepted that Mommy had homework to complete and gave me the space to do so. Finally, my parents, who gave me the world.
Dedication

To my daddy, who always said “I was too stupid to finish college” and was always so proud of every step I accomplished. It was you who made my dreams possible, and I know you are always by my side, my guardian angel.

To my husband, who believed in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself; who sacrificed so much time and never once complained so I could achieve my dreams.

To my sons, Nathan and Nicholas: May no obstacle stop you from achieving your dreams.

And lastly, to my daughter, Janelle, my why. When you came into this world, everyone believed that was it. Nineteen and pregnant meant I had ruined my life. Yet instead, beautiful girl, you inspired it. You gave me inspiration and motivation. You are the epitome of what hope and determination can do to alter the course of stereotypes, assumptions, and prejudice. You are the change.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Students from a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds arrive at our schools each day. In their backpacks, they bring more than school supplies and lunch boxes. They present with a myriad of unique strengths, needs, traditions, and perspectives. As educators, we welcome and serve all of these students. But how well do we meet this challenge? Are we providing instruction that is culturally responsive and equitable?

As an assistant principal of an intermediate school serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations, I must be able to provide support and professional development in order for the student population to be successful. “People rise to the occasion when they are helped by leaders who develop others to do something individually and collectively worthwhile” (Fullan, 2020, p. 2522). Leaders seek to cultivate the dispositions of teachers to improve the collective capacity of the organization.

Dispositions can be defined as “values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors towards students, families, colleagues and communities” (NCATE, 2002, p. 53). Some examples of dispositions I have observed are how the teacher’s discipline practices and beliefs do not match those of the students and families they teach. Many teachers struggle with the expectations they have with their own families and compare them to those of their students.

It is critical to evaluate the level of cultural proficiency teachers espouse. This, in turn, will allow one to investigate whether or not they are providing equitable education.
in diverse, high-poverty classrooms, specifically ones with predominantly African American and Latino populations, as well as how leaders can support their growth in cultural proficiency. I researched, interviewed, and analyzed school leaders and teachers who exhibited high levels of cultural proficiency within a low-income, urban community in order to find ways to support teachers who require more support and growth in developing their cultural proficiency. Depending on the teachers’ level of cultural proficiency, one can evaluate how successful teachers are in implementing social emotional learning with instruction that is culturally responsive to the needs of their classrooms. Once school leaders are able to identify how to support the development of cultural proficiency of their staff, the next step is to determine what specific opportunities leaders can provide teachers to foster an equitable and culturally responsive education.

My research was conducted in the district in which I was employed, Central School District (CSD). CSD is a suburban school district west of Chicago, Illinois composed predominantly of African American and Latino populations. The school district encompasses six neighboring communities. Students feed into either of two neighboring high school townships with similar student demographics.

The district serves students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade among six buildings. CSD is divided into two halves: Each side of the district has a primary school (grades PreK-2), an intermediate school (grades 3-5), and a middle school (grades 6-8) for a total of six schools serving approximately 3,000 students. Student demographics within CSD are 69% Hispanic, 23% Black, 5% White, and 3% Other. The community was 82% low income, 23% second-language learners, 17% with disabilities, and 1% homeless.
CSD’s central office has several roles in order to meet the demands of the district. The roles include Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, and Assistant Superintendent of Business Services. The district also has directors of English learning, nutritional services, special education, technology, and transportation.

Each school building has a principal and an assistant principal. Resources within each school are instructional coaches, ESL resource teachers, reading specialists, social worker, counselor and special education resource teachers based on the number of students requiring those services. Each building has approximately five to seven sections at each grade level with an average class size of 24. Spanish bilingual classrooms are offered from kindergarten through the fourth grades based on students who qualify using the ACCESS Screener and with parent/guardian acceptance. The ESL and bilingual education resources the school offers are in high demand considering CSD has almost three times the percentage of Hispanic students compared to Illinois state averages, according to the Illinois Interactive Report Card for CSD.

In November of 2017, CSD adopted a new mission statement: “Our mission is to serve as a partner in developing and empowering lifelong learners to celebrate diversity, embrace risk-taking, and become leaders in the global community.” The mission statement was created by a community of students, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and board members. When creating the mission, the committee was asked to think about the following questions to guide the development: “1) Why are we here? 2) Why do we exist? And 3) What is our purpose?” The mission is meant to be a foundation for
the district’s core beliefs and values. As the district continues to move forward with changes, challenges, and the provision of equitable programming for a diverse community, each decision will build upon the mission statement and its connection to the core values and beliefs.

As a passionate educator, my goal is to provide an equitable education to the community I serve and support my teachers in using cultural proficiency to support academic and social emotional instruction. My research analyzed school building leaders and teachers who currently exhibit high levels of cultural proficiency as well as evaluate how it was connected to the success of social emotional learning. It was also crucial to examine and identify how well leaders support and prepare teachers in providing equitable education and determine ways to support teachers in recognizing and reflecting on their core beliefs and how they affect the teaching profession.

Culturally responsive education can no longer be something we “think” we are doing, especially in high-poverty school districts where the education they are receiving is not equitable, either financially or instructionally. Sensoy, DiAngelo, and Banks (2017) address the writings of Ruby Payne and the “culture of poverty”:

She argues that those who are at the bottom of society are there because they are culturally deficient—that is, they lack the attitudes or work ethic necessary to “get ahead” in society. Perspectives such as these are sometimes referred to as cultural deficit theory. (p. 82)

In my own experience and observations, I have noticed that in high-poverty school districts, social and emotional issues are high, and often teachers from different races and/or backgrounds grapple with how to best handle the situation based on their
own level of cultural proficiency. Too often I see teachers struggle with understanding the cultural behaviors of their African American and Latino students. How teachers manage and discipline their students often provides examples of this. Middle-class, White teachers discipline their African American students either the way they were raised or the way they disciplined their own children, not recognizing that African American families have a different culture when it comes to discipline. I have observed these teachers become frustrated by the students’ response rather than reflect on how they need to learn the culture of the student in order to support the positive development of the child.

Geneva Gay states:

> Discontinuities in behavioral norms and expectations are not isolated incidents or rare occurrences in culturally pluralistic classrooms. They happen often and on many different fronts, simply because teachers fail to recognize, understand, or appreciate the pervasive influence of culture on their own and their students’ attitudes, values, and behaviors. (Gay, 2018, p. 30)

> It is natural to respond to issues based on your own experience; however, differences in culture can sometimes worsen situations. Different cultures, races, and religions all have beliefs on how to best raise children, and teachers tend to discipline at school similar to the way they discipline their own children, which works when the parents of your students discipline in the same manner. When teachers discipline differently than parents, issues arise. Either students do not respond and appear disrespectful or defiant, or the parents do not support the teacher. How can we blame students if we don’t teach them?
There is current research to support the belief that culturally responsive education and culturally proficient teachers are connected to academic success: “Teachers practicing culturally relevant teaching know how to support student learning by consciously creating social interactions that help them meet the criteria of academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness” (Sharroky, 2012, p. 305). Lindsey, Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey (2019) support this theory in regards to instructional leaders citing that “culturally proficient leaders display personal values and behaviors that enable them and others to engage in effective interactions among students, educators, and the communities they serve” (p. 5).

Gloria Ladson Billings recalls that during the 1960s civil rights movements, one of the primary issues they were facing was in education (Morris, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995). Despite the federal government’s failed attempts to support adult literacy, civil rights workers such as Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins were able to successfully teach those same adults by ensuring that the students learned what was most meaningful and relevant to them (Brown, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In essence, culturally proficient educators are proactive, allowing them to use tools that can be used in any setting and that support all learners, rather than activities and techniques only applicable in one environment. Cultural proficiency is values based and observed through educator behavior. It is applied to both educational organizational practices and through individual educator behavior (Lindsey et al., 2019).

I delved into these studies and researched to broaden my lens in order to deepen my understanding in order to support teachers in recognizing how important culturally proficient education is and how it will empower their classrooms and their instruction.
The following research questions guided this work:

**Primary Questions:**

1. To what extent do school leaders and teachers understand and influence culturally relevant practices that support teachers working in school districts serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations?

2. What programs and opportunities can be provided to educational stakeholders that foster cultural proficiency?

3. What role does cultural proficiency play in improving social emotional learning (SEL) and teaching and learning?

**Secondary Questions:**

1. How did the interviewee’s journey into education, motivation, and beliefs influence their cultural awareness?

2. How have the experiences and self-reflection influenced their cultural awareness and proficiency?

3. What approaches and/or strategies can one implement in order to support a teacher’s ability to support their African American and Latino students?

4. What role does cultural proficiency play in developing equitable educational opportunities?

5. What type(s) of professional development opportunities can school leaders implement to support teacher preparation coursework and ongoing professional development for teachers?
Within my own educational experience, I have observed several groups of educators every day who are attempting to transform our current educational system through research and innovation, but the barriers I have mentioned make it extremely difficult to provide a climate of high expectations and equitable education across the board. Through my research I hope to find ways to provide equitable, culturally responsive education in high-poverty schools through the role of the teacher.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Three overarching themes will be discussed within my literature review. The first theme will delve into critical race theory (CRT) and deficit thinking paradigms. Second, I examined the achievement gap between White, African American, and Latino students and its effects on society and the educational system in America creating a bridge to the opportunity gap. Lastly, I reviewed literature that explained culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching practices, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Through this review, I will develop a conceptual understanding of theories and practices to build teacher capacity to implement culturally relevant teaching practices through professional development.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) recognizes that racism is endemic in American society, and I will describe its impact on culturally responsive teaching. “In societies like the United States, where race has been a fundamental organizing principle since before the country’s founding . . . complex hierarchies [developed] in which those racialized bodies were treated differently in social, legal, political, and economic realms” (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 5). Based on Lewis and Diamond’s research, this racialization has had a significant impact on the American education system.

Muhammad defines the foundational theme of CRT as “racism as a ‘normal’ part of societal function and because our society accepts it as ordinary, it is difficult to cure except for the most blatant forms of discrimination” (2015, p. 488). Richard Delgado and
Jean Stefancic describe this further in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (2013):

“Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct it with words, stories and silence” (p. 3), and because our society accepts it, consciously or subconsciously, it is difficult for many people to face as well as overcome.

A deeper examination of CRT reveals a few themes associated with society’s perspective on racism in America:

*Interest convergence:* a large section of the American population has no vested interest in eradicating racism. Wealthy whites have a material interest in maintaining racism, and working-class whites have a psychological advantage to uphold.

*Social construction thesis:* refers to the notion that race is a product of social thought and relations. It suggests that race is a product of neither biology nor genetics, but is rather a social invention. (Muhammad, 2015, p. 488)

These themes are the underlying threads that allow for racism to continue as they explain how racism is interwoven throughout the fabric of American society.

CRT recognizes that racism is a given layer in American life and sets the tone for a foundation of deficit thinking. Many teachers come into their classrooms with predispositions about their students simply based on their race and socioeconomic status. Geneva Gay (2018) further explains the components of deficit thinking and how conventional understandings within American culture have inculcate a mindset that our differences (i.e., race, language) are seen as deficits. This fundamental approach,
with respect to improving the achievement of ethnically, racially, and culturally
diverse students, is the ‘deficit syndrome.’ Far too many educators attribute
school failure to what students of color don’t have and can’t do. (2018, p. 31)
Shifting the mindset and changing this paradigm are crucial in supporting teachers and
students to not have preconceptions about what students of color can and cannot achieve.

Sharroky (2012) shares the following examples of deficit thinking from a
teacher’s perspective:

1) If we had better students, then we would have better schools.
2) Our scores were good until they started coming here.
3) Everyone in our school seems to be doing well except for those kids.
4) The students are myopically viewed as lacking something. (p. 464)

“Those kids” are too often seen as the students who lack the ability to be successful, who
exhibit behavioral problems, or who have parents who do not appear to support their
education and somehow justify why “those kids” are not achieving. Many teachers are
unable to see that what their students bring to the classroom are assets and should inform
their teaching. They struggle to understand why the students do not respond to their way
of teaching. To change this paradigm, “educators have to shift their beliefs, attitudes, and
knowledge to a stance that sees what the student brings culturally and linguistically as an
asset, a capability, and an element that can be built upon,” which will set the tone that
“students are not the problem but rather the source of the solution” (p. 464). CRT directly
affects the nation’s racial achievement gap, and I will explain in the following section
how we can move forward towards shifting to an opportunity gap in supporting students
through culturally responsive pedagogy and practices.
The Achievement Gap vs. The Opportunity Gap

According to Lewis and Diamond (2015, p. 2), “Generally, the term racial achievement gap refers to disparities in test scores, grade point averages, and/or high school and college completion rates between white students and black and/or Latina/o students.” Research indicates that a closer look at the achievement gap through the lens provided by CRT reveals underlying hidden factors of the achievement gap. Dr. Anthony Muhammad (2015) refers to the work and research of Gloria Ladson-Billings on CRT in which she theorizes “that the racial achievement gap is a by-product of a deeper battle for power, using race as its anchor.” She and colleague William Tate identify this as the “power to construct, define, and control reality through the lens of white privilege,” and they point out that “schools are a part of a larger structure of institutionalized racism and without acknowledgment and collective action, the system will do what it was designed to do: perpetuate inequality” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, as cited in Muhammad, 2015, p. 499). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings and Tate go on to say, “Schools have become a part of a system that maintains inequality, and many educators do not even recognize they are partially culpable” (p. 499).

Educators continue to struggle with how to close this gap as well as how to properly and equitably serve all students. The need to discover how to provide culturally responsive education is becoming more and more prevalent as the racial achievement gap stays open. As New America Foundation (2008) says,

Before we can enact a responsive pedagogy, we must be able to simply recognize that there is a need for it in the first place. At its most optimistic, analysis of achievement levels in American schools sees the glass as half full, as critics such
as Diane Ravitch (2010) note. Even at half full, when it comes to most indicators, we must consider the system a collective failure. Put bluntly, the glass needs to be completely full, and looking at just one factor—high school graduation rates—demonstrates why this must be so. One third of all students fail to graduate in the United States, and only one half of African American, Latino, and Native American students graduate on time from high school. (New America Foundation, as cited in Muhammad & Sharroky, 2012, p. 82)

One report showed that in “some urban communities nearly 60 percent of African American males are failing to graduate from high school” (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as cited in Muhammad & Sharroky, 2012, p. 82). The problem we are seeing stems from a larger national problem that expands from the creation of NCLB with their focus on math and reading. According to Anthony Muhammad in his book *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*, “An overemphasis on mathematics and reading led to neglecting the students’ holistic needs. Programs aimed at addressing students’ social and emotional needs were underfunded” (2018, p. 15). This set a tone for schools nationwide that led to a decline in supporting SEL and continued professional development for teachers. This data clearly suggests the need for culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and practices.

In an attempt to transition from focusing on the achievement gap, it is critical to start challenging our thinking to looking for strategies to support the opportunity gap. Lewis and Diamond (2015) believe it is a mistake for educators to focus on the achievement gap and we should put more effort in the opportunity gaps of curriculum, assessments, and instruction. H. Richard Milner begins this thought process by redefining
the term *poverty* and that it “does not and should not define a person or a group of people—there is no ‘culture of poverty’” (2015, p. 13). Many who live in poverty care very deeply for the educational opportunities provided for their children, and their lack of formal education does not take away from that need. Unfortunately, living in poverty comes with many barriers such as limited resources, insufficient health care, restricted access to healthy food and high-quality schools which encourage and support complex problem-solving, cultivate creativity, and provide proper social emotional supports and equitable educational programming (Milner, 2015). The key to understanding student success and the opportunity gap lies in recognizing that race and socioeconomic status are constant themes in addressing the disparities within the educational system.

Milner (2015) goes on to elaborate on four goals for district- and school-level reform that will create opportunities for students living in poverty:

1. Understand and practice equitable decision making
2. Understand and respond to neighborhood conditions
3. Reduce class size for school-dependent students (i.e., for students who rely heavily on school for their academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and affective development)
4. Rethink and reform the inflexible, narrowed curriculum. (p. 33)

Though these four goals and the reform they suggest go beyond a single school or a district, they do elaborate on how school leaders and teachers with a conceptual understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy can implicitly and positively support underserved students of color or low socioeconomic status, as well as extend equitable educational opportunities to *all* students and support academic success.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practices

It is a privilege to believe that good teaching is simply good teaching, which is what many educators believe will support culturally relevant pedagogy and close achievement gaps. However, this form of thinking also hinders shifting how we teach. Those who have this mindset “fail to realize that their standards of ‘goodness’ in teaching and learning are culturally determined and are not the same for all ethnic groups. The structures, assumptions, substance, and operations of conventional educational enterprises are European American cultural icons” (Pai et al., as cited in Gay, 2018, p. 29).

A teacher’s instruction and planning are always assumed to be done with the best intentions. Unfortunately, good intentions are not enough to meet the individual needs of every student, and that planning should also purposefully be aware that “respecting the individual differences of students is really what counts in effective teaching, not race, ethnicity, culture, or gender” (p. 30). Ignoring the ingrained make-up of who they are, as well as how it affects and will affect their lives does not set up students to meet their full potential. Geneva Gay goes on to state, “The individuality of students is deeply entwined with their ethnic identity and cultural socialization” (p. 30), meaning that good teaching is much more than simply teaching good lessons, it involves making students see themselves within their learning. She also goes on to quote from Pai and associates’ (2006) Cultural Foundations of Educations:

How we teach, what we teach, how we relate to children and each other, what our goals are—these are rooted in the norms of our culture. Our society’s predominant worldview and cultural norms are so deeply ingrained in how we
educate children that we very seldom think about the possibility that there may be other different but equally legitimate and effective approaches to teaching and learning. In a society with as much sociocultural and racial diversity as the United States, the lack of this wonderment about alternative ways often results in unequal education and social injustice. (Pai et al., as cited in Gay, 2018, p. 29)

It is imperative to transform and directly face our views on equity and how they affect student learning. “Teachers must learn how to recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 6). As we work through this shift, we must also be cognizant of how the presumption of privilege and entitlement, systems of oppression, unawareness of the need to adapt, and resistance to change affect our ways of thinking and teaching. Schools and classrooms need to provide spaces where all students are validated and affirmed in who they are and be aware of bias and stereotypes as they move forward. As Hollie Sharroky (2012) explains,

Teachers jump into the pool with the learners, guide them with appropriate instruction, scaffold as necessary, and provide for independence when they are ready. *Validation* is the intentional and purposeful legitimization of the home culture and language of the student. Such validation has been traditionally delegitimatized by historical institutional and structural racism, stereotypes, and generalizations primarily carried forth through mainstream media. *Affirmation* is the intentional and purposeful effort to reverse the negative stereotypes of non-mainstream cultures and languages portrayed in historical perspective. (p. 329)
Culturally relevant teaching practices (which can also be referred to as culturally proficient or culturally responsive) use this pedagogy as a foundation for creating these spaces, where all students are seen and heard. These practices will “benefit any student who is identified as underserved as opposed to the more commonly labeled underachieving or underperforming student” (Sharroky, 2012, p. 333). Sharroky defines an underserved student as “any student who is not successful academically, socially, and/or behaviorally in school because the school as an institution is not being responsive to that student’s needs” (p. 343). Through validation and affirmation of all students, educators must intentionally and purposefully research, plan, and execute lessons that best meet the needs of their students using culturally relevant practices.

Randall Lindsey and associates explain: “Culturally competent and culturally proficient behaviors align with standards that move an organization or an individual toward culturally proficient interactions” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 5). They go on to describe four tools in their framework for developing cultural competence:

1. *The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency*—Caveats that assist in overcoming resistance to change
2. *The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency*—Underlying core values of the approach
3. *The Cultural Proficiency Continuum*—Language for describing both healthy and nonproductive policies, practices, and individual values and behaviors
4. *The Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency*—Behavioral standards for measuring and planning for growth toward Cultural Competence or Cultural Proficiency (p. 6)

The guiding principles of cultural proficiency, according to Lindsey et al. (2019) discuss that culture is a predominant force and that one simply cannot not have a culture. Lindsey et al. (2019) go on to state that people are served in multiple degrees by the dominant culture and the group identity of individuals is equally as important as their individual identities. They also identify that diversity within a culture is vast and each group has their own unique cultural needs and characteristics. Lindsey et al. (2019) also deduce that the school system must incorporate cultural knowledge into their practices and policy making. These principles are a response to the barriers educators face when ignoring the cultures of the students and provide a framework for educators to overcome these moral obstacles.

Randall Lindsey et al. (2019) describe The Cultural Proficiency Learning Continuum as including six points that “indicate unique ways of seeing and responding to difference” (p. 7). The first three outline a set of unhealthy values, behaviors, policies, and practices that emerge from barriers to cultural proficiency while the other three points of the continuum represent healthy individual values and behaviors as well as healthy organizational policies and practices of cultural proficiency which can be seen in the figure below.
The six points along this continuum force educators to analyze and identify where they fall on this continuum along with the organization and system in which they work (see Appendix A). Understanding these points opens doors for reflection in order to move along the continuum.

Lindsey et al. identified five essential elements to cultural proficiency that “serve as standards to guide educators’ development and embracement of values and behaviors that best serve the academic and social needs of their students” (2019, p. 8). They are meant to “guide schools and districts in the development and implementation of policies and practices inclusive of the diverse range of students in the school” (p.8). The five elements:

1. **Assess culture**—Identify and learn about the differences among the people in your environment.
2. **Value diversity**—Embrace the differences as contributing to the value of the environment.

3. **Manage the dynamics of difference**—Reframe the differences so that diversity is not perceived as a problem to be solved.

4. **Adapt to diversity**—Teach and learn about differences and how to respond to them effectively.

5. **Institutionalize cultural knowledge**—Change the systems to ensure healthy and effective responses to diversity. (p. 8-9)

School leaders and teachers can use these elements to help them identify and more deeply understand either their behavior or the behaviors of their colleagues in becoming culturally proficient. We want to move away from the mindset of shaping our students to be more like us to understanding themselves and developing empathy and appreciation of our differences and the positive contribution it can make to our society.

Bridging this concept into practical classroom practices can be seen in the following five categories: responsive classroom management, responsive academic literacy (or use of text), responsive academic vocabulary, responsive academic language (or situational appropriateness), and a responsive learning environment (Sharroky, 2012). I will discuss the categories in the following sections.

**Culturally Responsive Classroom Management**

Responsive classroom management includes ways for responding, ways for discussing, attention signals, and movement (Sharroky, 2012). This is most often tied to effective classroom management, which can be defined as “means that instruction can occur without interruptions and disruptions, that the students feel safe and comfortable
enough to take risks—to approximate or make mistakes, and that the environment is conducive to optimal learning” (Marzano, as cited in Sharroky, 2012). However, responsive classroom management goes more deeply into developing a classroom with respect, rapport, and authentic relationships.

Rapport is a “special connection between the teacher and the student that leads to an understanding based on concern and care for one another” (Sharroky, 2012, p. 951). This can be observed between a teacher and student who exhibit caring for one another in their interactions. Relationships are established upon a foundation of trust, where “the implication is that there are times when the teacher may not like what a student is doing but has the freedom to manage the behavior because of the trust that exists” (p. 951).

Lastly, mutual respect is “based on the teacher’s ability to convey knowledge with understanding and sensitivity to the audience” (p. 966). All of the above must be approached by being positive, proactive, and preventative.

Sharroky (2012) explains that being positive is the most important aspect of a culturally responsive classroom. Being positive means “having a set of uncomplicated and intangible characteristics that are demonstrated consistently to the students—such as care, empathy, sensitivity, kindness, calmness, humor, forgiveness, and patience” (Gay, as cited in Sharroky, 2012, p. 1010). Teachers must enjoy their practice, and it must show in their interactions with their students and colleagues. If the teacher has a negative attitude toward either their students or their career, it will greatly affect their teaching and the success of their students.

Next, teachers must be proactive. Teachers need to know “who the students are and [recognize] when occurrences in the yard or happenings in their personal life have
preceded (and likely contributed to) what happens in the classroom” (Sharroky, 2012, p. 1004). Most educators can agree that functioning reactively takes time away from instruction, causes frustration, and opens a space that enables unwanted behaviors, but being proactive beats being reactive every time.

Teachers and school leaders choose their battles on a consistent basis, which lends itself to being preventative (Sharroky, 2012). One can either choose to fight with a student in an ongoing, repetitive manner, typically a power struggle between teacher and student, or to deal with the student in a way that sends the message that the behavior is unacceptable without draining time and energy from necessary instruction.

In terms of classroom management, it is also imperative to be cognizant of cultural behaviors and inappropriate behaviors. While in school, students need to be explicitly taught the norms for appropriate school behavior while taking into consideration their cultural norms. Sharroky (2012) explains, “Through teaching situational appropriateness, no value is placed on any culture, in terms of bad versus good, high versus low, standard versus substandard” (p. 1056). Appropriate behaviors are determined solely by the situation and in order to be successful, culturally responsive teachers must be able to decipher between wrong behaviors and culturally inappropriate behaviors.

**Culturally Responsive Academic Literacy**

Responsive academic literacy instruction requires teachers to consistently and appropriately select culturally responsive texts that supplement the core instructional program (Sharroky, 2012). Teachers must be able to choose culturally specific texts that authentically highlight the experience of the group culturally and not racially, which
realistically taps into norms, mores, traditions, customs, and beliefs of the culture identified within the text. Depending on the standard being taught, there may be a stress on the history of racial discrimination, a struggle for freedom, or an emphasis on racial or cultural pride. Another example would be the effective use of read-alouds, which simulate the cultural norm of storytelling for many students. Lastly, it is important to continue to use effective literacy strategies with the strategic and purposeful culturally responsive activities.

Experts have identified several principles of vocabulary instruction that should be included in any program or approach to promote culturally responsive instruction, especially when working with underserved students (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Graves, 2006; Stahl, 1999, as cited in Sharroky, 2012). These principles comprise the following:

- providing definitional and contextual information about the word’s meaning;
- actively involving students in word learning through talking about, comparing, analyzing, and using the target words;
- providing multiple exposures to meaningful information about each word; and teaching word analysis. (Sharroky, 2012, p. 1502)

Culturally “responsive vocabulary teaching acknowledges that students have a comprehensive conceptual knowledge base rooted in their culture, community, and life experiences that can be used to build academic vocabulary. Plainly put, students come to school with some knowledge” (p. 1502).
Culturally Responsive Academic Language Acquisition

Culturally responsive linguistic teaching practices recognize the linguistic rules of nonstandard languages, give students ample opportunities for codeswitching, and infuse writing activities into everyday teaching (Sharroky, 2012). Having a strong foundation in these ideas helps teachers avoid *language deficit*, which “is a perspective commonly held about the home languages of students who have been identified as the most likely to be underserved” (p. 1850). Culturally responsive linguistic teaching practices are designed to overcome “the barriers that this perspective presents not only for students but also for teachers, administrators, and policymakers” (p. 1850).

Sharroky explains that language is developed through a linguistic process she refers to as *relexification*, which means, “the deep grammatical structure of the indigenous languages was retained over time while the vocabulary of the dominant culture or language meshed, forming a hybrid language of the two forms” (2012, p. 1954). For example, many researchers have studied African American students, as well as the other research-identified populations, who come to school speaking a language that is dissimilar to but no less valuable than the language of instruction, which we commonly refer to as *standard English*. This has led to barriers of nonstandard versus standard English, in specific what is known as *Ebonics*. The best explanation of Ebonics:

Robert L. Williams (1975), affectionately known as the Father of Ebonics, defines Ebonics as the linguistic and paralinguistic features that on a concentric continuum represent the communicative competence of West African, Caribbean, and United States slave descendants of African origin. . . . Ebonics derives its form from ebony (black) and phonics (sound) and refers to the study of language.
of Black people. This term was coined in 1973 at a conference of Black psycholinguists and sociolinguists. It was not invented during the 1996 Oakland Ebonics controversy. Ebonics refers to the “language family” spoken by Africans throughout the diaspora, which includes Black people in Jamaica (Jamaican Patois) and the Caribbean (Caribbean dialects), South America, Mexico (Black Spanish), and Europe (Black Portugese). (Sharroky, 2012, p. 1930)

She further states that “the purposes of validating and affirming the ethnolinguistic perspective has the greatest potential for impact because it calls for the educator to explicitly acknowledge and affirm the home language as a means to achieving” (2012, p. 1954). The culturally responsive teacher provides an academic environment that validates, affirms, and bridges the home language to the school language.

**Culturally Responsive Learning Environment**

Creating a culturally responsive learning environment is a critical building block in culturally responsive practices. “A responsive learning environment is one that conveys respect for every student, notably respect for the knowledge, experiences, and language students bring to the classroom” (Sharroky, 2012, p. 2263). In one lens, this means considering what an outsider walking into a school sees and hears, as well as wondering what type of impression they have when they walk through the doors. Furthermore, what is the climate of the school and how is it portrayed through the various constituents that walk the halls?

According to Sharroky (2012), a culturally responsive environment is centered around eight critical elements:
1. Print-Rich Environment: 70 percent authentic and 30 percent commercially produced
2. Learning Centers: reading, writing, listening, math, science, and cultural
3. Culturally Colorful: ethnic cloths, prints, artwork, and artifacts
4. Arranged Optimally: allowing for presentations, movement, and teacher and student space
5. Multiple Libraries: cultural, multicultural, content specific, reading level, and signature literature
6. Use of Technology: utilized and prominently displayed
7. Relevant Bulletin Boards: cultural, student work, current unit, current events, and content-area oriented
8. Displayed Student Work and Images of Students: current, ample, and unit-related (p. 2298)

These eight elements provide a specific foundation for teachers to purposefully and intentionally include within the classroom environment (see Appendix B for a sample culturally responsive learning environment resource). It creates a space that is academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally welcoming for students to be validated and affirmed, a place where they can thrive.
CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

The research design used in this qualitative research study utilized the inquiry theory and framework described in Michael Patton’s 2008 *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*. The research was conducted through four one-on-one interviews with two school leaders and two teachers from Central School District (CSD) who practice and apply culturally responsive pedagogy and strategies. The data collected through these interviews guided the social justice principles of equity, fairness, and concern for the common welfare of all students (Patton, 2008; Sirotnik, 1990) to create the programs necessary to ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and applicable strategies as avenues for school leaders to support teachers in culturally responsive education. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for themes in relation to culturally responsive pedagogy.

When conducting this program evaluation within the CSD, the evaluation purpose, as Patton (2008) described, is to provide formative improvement and learning as well as promote the development of all stakeholders in providing culturally proficient education. Improvement-oriented evaluations share “a focus on improvement—making things better—rather than rendering summative judgment” (p. 116). This study aims to provide leaders with data and research to help them build capacity and cultivate their teachers’ cultural proficiency, free of judgement. In addition as a developmental study, this research aims to “nurture developmental, emergent, innovative, and transformative
processes” (p. 137) to create and implement teacher preparation coursework and ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and applicable strategies.

In this case, qualitative methodology aided in determining the qualities of culturally proficient school leaders and teacher participants. As noted in Chapter One, the following questions required an in-depth study to more deeply understand the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in the work:

Primary Questions:

1. To what extent do school leaders and teachers understand and influence culturally relevant practices that support teachers working in school districts serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations?

2. What programs and opportunities can be provided to educational stakeholders that foster cultural proficiency?

3. What role does cultural proficiency play in improving social emotional learning (SEL) and teaching and learning?

Secondary Questions:

1. How did the interviewee’s journey into education, motivation, and beliefs influence their cultural awareness?

2. How have the experiences and self-reflection influenced their cultural awareness and proficiency?

3. What approaches and/or strategies can one implement in order to support a teacher’s ability to support their African American and Latino students?
4. What role does cultural proficiency play in developing equitable educational opportunities?

5. What type(s) of professional development opportunities can school leaders implement to support teacher preparation coursework and ongoing professional development for teachers?

The feedback explored how the data could build evaluation capacity of the CSD organization to support staff in thinking evaluatively about current culturally responsive and social emotional learning practices that could be mainstreamed or aligned to other school or district priorities, initiatives, goals, and plans (Patton, 2008, p. 157). Through this evaluation, school leaders find ways to best support teachers in learning and applying culturally responsive educational practices.

Participants

The key participants from whom I gathered data included two school leaders and two teachers who effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices within CSD. Through anecdotal notes and observations as a practicing school leader, I identified two effective school leaders and through interviews with those selected leaders, I identified two teachers within their prospective schools to conduct the research. This is participation selection process is grounded in Gloria Ladson-Billings’ idea of “community nomination,” which supports the concept that “researchers rely upon members and community-sanctioned vehicles in order to judge people, places and things within their own settings,” (1994, p.147). Demographics of participants were not considered as a part of this sampling. This purposeful sampling will allow me to, as Patton (2008) states, pay “particular attention to uniqueness, whether this be an
individual’s uniqueness or the uniqueness of a program, community, home, or other unit of analysis,” (p. 459). After analyzing participants who already practice culturally responsive teaching practices, I then determined what factors and characteristics they possess and used that data to cultivate opportunities for growth and support other school leaders and teachers in becoming culturally proficient.

**Data Gathering Techniques**

Various types of data were collected through several methods in order for me to analyze how school leaders can support a teacher’s professional development using culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and practices in working with predominantly African American and Latino student populations using Patton’s (2008) Utilization-Focused Framework for Engaging Learners. The data was vetted to support suggested programs and opportunities that can be provided to educational stakeholders, as well as the role cultural proficiency plays in improving academic and social emotional learning.

**Interviews**

A total of four interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted from thirty to sixty minutes. Two identified culturally proficient school leaders participated in two out of the four one-on-one interviews. From these interviews, I analyzed the transcriptions and identified themes and patterns to determine their personal perspectives and experiences that supported their understanding and practice of cultural proficiency within a school setting. I also explored how they currently support or would like to support teachers in implementing culturally proficient practices.

Two identified culturally proficient teachers participated in two out of the four one-on-one interviews that were approximately thirty to sixty minutes. From these
interviews, I analyzed the transcriptions and identified themes and patterns to determine their personal perspectives and experiences that supported their understanding and practice of culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and practices within a classroom setting.

Document Analysis

Transcription and coding of the interviews were completed to identify emerging themes and patterns among the participants. Use of the school report card, district professional development offerings, sample district curriculum maps, and sample university teacher and preparation coursework provided input and information for program development in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices elaborated on within Chapter Four in order to identify elements specific to the district and interview participants in relation to culturally responsive pedagogy and practices.

Program Development Efforts Utilizing Research

Scholarly research was incorporated to provide background and support in developing programs and opportunities that foster and support the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and applied strategies for teachers. Thorough research lays the foundation for evaluative thinking and contributes to all aspects of an organization’s effectiveness (Patton, 2008). It provided a lens through which all stakeholders could use a common language and share meanings and priorities.

Analytic Memos/Notes

During and after data collection, the use of analytic memos allowed me to incorporate my insights and observations as a practicing school leader, educator, and researcher and how they apply to my research questions and provide opportunities for
growth in cultural proficiency. Engaging in the evaluation as a practicing school leader can have as much or more of an impact than the findings generated (Patton, 2008).

**Ethical Considerations**

The privacy, confidentiality, risks, and benefits are highly important and must be fully considered throughout the course of study. All participants were provided with Informed Consent forms to sign (see Appendix C). This form served to explain two processes:

[One was] the process of providing information to prospective subjects. The second is documentation that the process took place and is a record of the subjects’ agreement to take part in the study. In practice, informed consent forms often are used as a means to provide information about a study, and, when signed, serve as documentation of consent. (Hicks, as cited in CITI, n.d., p.5)

Other considerations to be included:

- Foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject may be a factor during the interviews that involve situations directly related to race and bias. It may bring up feelings or force one to face beliefs that one would prefer not to share for fear of judgement or retribution.

- Benefits to the participants or to others, which may reasonably be expected from the research, are growth of cultural proficiency and improved instruction. However, that may be subjective. “If there are no direct benefits, the researchers may tell subjects what they hope to learn, how that knowledge will contribute to the field of study or how the knowledge might benefit others if such a case can be made” (Hicks, as
cited in CITI, n.d., pg. 5), which may have been the case during the interviews.

Data Analysis Techniques

Interviews

In depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted using twelve probing questions to elicit and reflect on personal experiences and perspectives allowing the participant to connect the questions to their experiences, core beliefs, and philosophies that have guided their current beliefs and practices in education (the school leader and teacher interview questions can be found in Appendices D and E). Through these conversations, personal or societal assumptions were examined throughout the interviews that, at times, aroused emotions that brought to the surface thoughts, feelings, and knowledge tied to culturally responsive pedagogy (Patton, 2008). Patton explains this as an instrumentation effect: “The process of being taken through a directed, reflective process can leave interviewees realizing things about themselves they were not fully aware of before the interview” (p. 169). This allowed the participant to explore and reflect on the themes of cultural awareness and bias in correlation to their educational practices and beliefs.

Document Analysis

The purpose of analyzing CSD professional development offerings, a sample of university teacher preparation coursework, CSD curriculum map, and the CSD district report card was to identify any specific gaps or elements that do not support professional development in culturally relevant teaching practices and culturally relevant curriculum that may have contributed to the lack of culturally competent practices. Specifically, the lack of CSD professional development offerings, lack of purposeful culturally relevant
curriculum and/or resources, and the analysis of a sample of university teacher preparation coursework sought to disclose accountability at district and higher education levels to create a sense of urgency to change how teachers are prepared and supported for culturally relevant instruction. Additionally, analyzing the district report card laid the technical foundation in regards to demographics and the need for culturally relevant teaching practices as a norm to best support all students.

**Program Development Efforts Utilizing Research**

Key learnings from the scholarly research were incorporated throughout the paper to provide background and support in developing programs and opportunities that aligned with the emerging themes from the interviews that supported culturally responsive pedagogy and applied strategies for teachers. Thorough research contributes to enhancing shared understandings and supporting and reinforcing program interventions in an organization’s effectiveness (Patton, 2008). Alignment of emergent themes and key learning focused all stakeholders on using a common language, sharing beliefs, and increasing the impact and value of the study.

**Analytic Memos/Notes**

Analytic memos used my lens and experience as a practicing school leader, educator, and researcher to align my research questions into providing context for the value and need of culturally proficient educators within the educational system. I engaged in the evaluation with my perspective and experience as a practicing school leader, which provided a firsthand account in support of the findings generated alone (Patton, 2008).
Conclusion

As I researched culturally relevant pedagogy and practices, I conducted interviews with two culturally proficient school leaders and two culturally proficient teachers to understand what contributed to their cultural proficiency. Through one-on-one interviews, participants were asked to describe their journey into education, motivation, and beliefs; their understanding of cultural proficiency; and the approaches or strategies necessary to support cultural proficiency and professional development.

Transcription and coding of the interviews, document analysis, and analytic memos were completed to identify emerging themes and patterns among the participants. This provided the necessary information for program development in cultural proficiency. The identified themes of effective culturally proficient educators allowed me to develop programs and opportunities for teaching and learning in supporting teachers serving African American and Latino student populations. The data collected and analyzed will engage discussion and suggestions for school leaders to support teachers in becoming culturally proficient, which is further explained in Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I gathered and analyzed data from one-on-one interviews, document analysis, program development efforts utilizing research, and analytic memos. Six key learnings were identified through data analysis, including core beliefs/past experiences, cultural awareness, awareness of assumptions, modeling necessary for students, modeling necessary for teachers, and the need for strong relationships. The four data-analysis techniques allowed me to align the six emerging themes and how they critically affect teaching and learning for African American and Latino students and the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and practices.

Summary of Interview Findings

Through interviews, coding and transcribing in researching culturally proficient educators to determine how to best support teachers in becoming culturally competent, six common themes were identified among the participants: core beliefs/past experiences, cultural awareness, awareness of assumptions, modeling necessary for students, modeling necessary for teachers, and the need for strong relationships.

In this chapter, I will present my findings from the one-on-one interviews with culturally proficient educators in Table 4.1 (see Appendix F) and are used to explore and support the context of the analysis of the As-Is and To-Be sections. Also included will be my own experiences as a practicing school leader and educator along with Wagner’s systems theory, specifically the Arena of Change (Wagner et al., 2006). Systems theory allows one to analyze an organization to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships.
of the organization as a whole, and the more specific interrelationships among the four
components within the Arena of Change. Wagner’s four specific organizational
components were used to describe the areas of change needed in Central School District
to support teachers in practicing and applying culturally responsive pedagogy within their
daily instruction.

Through the recommendations suggested by Patton (2008), the analysis of the
results sought to explore the evaluation findings by “organizing raw data into an
understandable form that reveals basic patterns and constitutes the evaluations empirical
findings” (p. 478). The significant findings included in Table 4.1 support interview
findings that are listed verbatim from each participant and organized by the six themes
that emerged from the analysis of the one-on-one interviews with the participants. As
Patton (2008) states, “Data need to be arranged, ordered, and organized in some
reasonable format that permits decision makers to detect patterns” (p. 479). I also pulled
quotes from the interviews that are dispersed throughout the paper and that provide
context to support key learnings. The To-Be analysis of Section 5 will use the six
emerging themes and findings to inform and support the research study.

As-Is Analysis

I will define the four arenas of change—context, culture, conditions, and
competencies— and describe the elements that need to be changed in correlation to how
incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy will lay a strong foundation for successful
academic and social emotional learning. Next, I will present interview findings to support
my research and reflective memos that will encourage how to influence the four arenas of
change since, “Cultural Proficiency is a model for shifting the culture of the school or
district; it is a model for individual transformation and organizational change” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 5).

In order to take a closer look at the systemic implementation and application of how leaders can support teachers in their gaining and applying a deeper understanding of cultural proficiency within the school and how it directly correlates to social and emotional learning, I used the 4Cs framework of context, culture, competencies, and conditions as explained by Wagner et al. (2006) in Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools. The first of the 4Cs is competencies, which is defined as “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (p. 99). Conditions are “the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources” (p. 101). Culture is defined as “the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (p. 102). Context refers to the “skills and demands all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners and citizens and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of families and community that the school or district serves” (p. 104). This framework along with my professional observations and experiences will more deeply examine the systemic implementation and application of how leaders can support teachers in their gaining and applying a deeper understanding of cultural proficiency.
Taking a deeper dive into the context of Central School District, it is necessary to analyze the “larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 104) of the district. Through my lived observations and experiences within Central School District, some staff have been observed expressing concerns that there are students who come to school not knowing how to act appropriately and assume they are taught these expectations at home, which leads one to believe these teachers lack an understanding that it is their role to
explicitly teach situational appropriateness. Teachers who are not culturally proficient have misguided perceptions that there is a difference for some students in knowing and exhibiting appropriate home behavior versus appropriate school behavior. As School Leader A explains, “Until you know a student’s background and their experiences and their traditions and their cultures and everything that makes them who they are, you can’t support someone’s social, emotional well-being without knowing what their family culture is.” This connects to the barriers and limited understanding that halt the implementation of cultural proficiency, or the “set of caveats—systemic oppression and privilege, the presumption of entitlement, resistance to change, and unawareness of the need to adapt—all of which result in barriers to becoming culturally proficient” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 89) exhibited in the behaviors in some of the teachers in CSD.

With limited understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, those teachers see the student as the problem instead of seeing them for themselves. As Teacher A explained, “I think there’s a difference between teaching and teaching the kids that are in front of you. I think that is where we have to start. What do the kids that are in front of you need? What do we need to do to help them?” Due to this lack of awareness for some teachers, they continue to resist learning about the individual students and their culture, which is not only crucial to the success of their students, but one of the main roles and responsibilities of the teacher. Instruction goes beyond academic subjects, and until this mindset is embraced, teachers and administrators will continue to struggle to positively support students academically and emotionally.

Many teachers lack cultural competency and often subconsciously impose their own beliefs and experiences on their expectations of how the students they serve should
be disciplined. Geneva Gay (2018) explains how it is not uncommon for teachers to redirect or correct student behaviors that are outside of what they believe are behavioral norms or expectations but are actually cultural behaviors. She states, “They happen often and on many different fronts, simply because teachers fail to recognize, understand, or appreciate the pervasive influence of culture on their own and their students’ attitudes, values, and behaviors” (p. 30). With a lack of self-reflection, self awareness, and cultural awareness, certain teachers continue to struggle with the students they serve who are different from them in order to best understand how to meet their needs. Little to no professional development in restorative practices or cultural awareness makes implementation difficult. If teachers do not naturally have the same level of knowledge and understanding of cultural awareness, it is near impossible for them to correctly utilize restorative practices in their classrooms. This leads to those teachers who lack cultural proficiency being unable to manage and support negative student behaviors that affect their instruction and their confidence.

Central School District did not provide any professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy for teachers or school leaders. One district institute day in February of 2019 had a speaker who provided a one-hour presentation for district staff on the foundation of restorative practices with no follow up or ongoing professional development offered through the rest of the school year. Teachers and school leaders walked away with limited understanding of how to implement these practices in their prospective schools along with no district guidance for ongoing implementation. This is not work that can be done in isolated experiences as Geneva Gay (2018) supports by stating, “The changes need to be sustained, substantive, and comprehensive. This is
another reason why classroom teachers, however dedicated and capable they may be, cannot do the job alone” (p. 276). School leaders and teachers throughout the district struggled to shift from punitive to restorative mindsets and were unable to agree upon a shared belief and common language around these practices due to a lack of communication among all stakeholders.

**Culture of Inconsistent Values Around Cultural Proficiency**

The culture of the district, based on my observations and experiences, was attempting to shift punitive mindsets and traditional ways of teaching and learning that did not formally involve or provide ongoing professional development of culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers left the one-hour restorative practice presentation with more questions about or resistance to implementing restorative practices in their classrooms and schools. No formal plans were initiated by the district to shift this mindset and properly develop and implement restorative practices in the district.

Considering the enormous mind shift this work involves, resistance from stakeholders was a barrier to embracing culturally responsive practices. As Geneva Gay (2018) writes, “One of the most recalcitrant of these obstacles is the tenacity of tradition. U.S. educational institutions are notoriously conservative and resistant to change” (p. 277). Teachers and parents/guardians resisted changing the way educators have traditionally addressed both external and internal social/emotional and behavioral concerns regarding students and student discipline. Without a clear shared vision and framework from the district, inadequate support and guidance from district office administration did not support the sense of urgency surrounding these issues. Sadly, this
led to feelings of resentment and toxic teacher conversations that flowed around the district, placing seeds of negativity in other teachers’ minds.

As Elena Aguilar explains, when negativity, gossip, and conflict are not dealt with,

rampant gossip fuels toxic cultures, which are further charged by individuals working independently all the time, warring camps, divisions across racial or ethnic lines, perpetual negativity, hostile faculty meetings, and misdirected values focused on enforcing rules, teaching basic skills, and serving a small group of elite students. (Deal & Peterson, as cited in Aguilar, 2018, p. 117)

Not being guided by school leaders in a thoughtful, researched, and well planned-out manner allowed teachers to, as a group, resist changing their practices and not reflect on their students’ needs and self-reflection. Limited district guidance, support, resources, and a lack of shared beliefs and understandings around cultural proficiency, set the stage for a district culture that was not open to implementing and embracing culturally responsive practices.

Teacher-student relationships were also inconsistent and often strained for teachers resistant to culturally responsive practices, specifically with students who struggled with external behaviors or did not build relationships with students outside of the academic setting. Gay (2018) explains how critical teacher-student relationships are:

Teachers can no longer be dispassionate and distant in their relationships with students, or attempt to avoid controversial topics and harsh social realities. Nor can they focus on students’ limitations instead of their strengths and potentialities.
They can no longer find solace in beliefs that their teaching responsibilities are limited to academic skills and textbook content. (p. 63)

The interview with School Leader B also supports this importance by explaining:

I think that when a student has a relationship with a teacher they’re going to work hard for that teacher and for that educator. . . . That in and of itself is learning, like social skills and being appropriate and being respectful.

When serious situations occurred, teachers were unable to resolve the issues and students were sent to the office. The teacher was often left out of the restorative process with the students and their families, leaving unresolved and unrepaird relationships and a lack of communication between the teacher and the student as well as among the teacher and administrator handling the situation.

Relationships, altercations, limited worth placed on culturally responsive practices, and inconsistent values all played a role in a culture that was not conducive to supporting the significance that cultural proficiency can espouse in the lives of underserved students and their teachers.

**Conditions that Lack Cultural Competence**

The conditions of the school made it difficult for many teachers to practice and espouse cultural competence within a school environment. Within Central School District, the conditions “represent the visible arrangements and allocations of time, space and money” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102). At this time, there was no professional development offered to staff or ongoing support in regards to the one-hour presentation, nor was there a purposeful integration of culturally relevant curriculum. This is a concern, as many teachers lack cultural competency and an understanding of restorative
practices. CSD staff were not provided time to deepen their understanding of culturally relevant practices. Without a dedicated time for self-reflection and ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices, and without guidance and support, teachers felt it was not a priority and not something they should seek to develop.

The teacher demographics at the time show the disparity in teacher versus student demographics.

*Figure 2.* The demographics of teachers in Central School District in 2019 (omitted for confidentiality, n.d.)
Figure 3. The demographics of students in Central School District in 2019 (omitted for confidentiality, n.d.)

Such a significant variance among teacher and student demographics clearly presented the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. Within the classroom, teachers who lacked culturally responsive pedagogy and practices struggled with negative behaviors that ultimately affected instruction and student success. These teachers’ NWEA MAP scores did not meet or exceed their student growth goals and often indicated multiple office referrals. Once students were sent to the office, consequences, whether they be punitive or restorative, were under the discretion of the administrator, and unfortunately many students spent more time out of their classrooms with behavioral concerns, rather than in their classrooms learning.

District curriculum maps also lacked culturally relevant texts or lessons. Curriculum maps solely used the language verbatim from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and gave teachers the autonomy to choose texts for the standards they
taught within each module with no specific directions on incorporating culturally relevant texts or instruction.

Figure 4. Sample Page. Sample from 5th grade Reading Literature strand of the curriculum map (omitted for confidentiality, n.d.).

Without direct guidance or samples to choose from, nonculturally proficient teachers were not purposeful in their selections and were unaware of how to incorporate texts that were culturally relevant and connected to the students they taught. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) themselves do not intentionally include how to implement culturally relevant instruction and leave that to districts themselves to incorporate. The CCSS Initiative explicitly states in their Frequently Asked Questions section:
Will CCSSO and the NGA Center be creating common instructional materials and curricula? No. The standards are not curricula and do not mandate the use of any particular curriculum. Teachers are able to develop their own lesson plans and choose materials, as they have always done. States that have adopted the standards may choose to work together to develop instructional materials and curricula. As states work individually to implement their new standards, publishers of instructional materials and experienced educators will develop new resources around these shared standards. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.)

These conditions that the district and CCSS provide and many states follow, do not lay the foundation for supporting culturally responsive teaching practices, curricula, and resources.

**Limited and/or Lack of Teacher Competencies**

The competencies of the teachers were limited in understanding culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. In classrooms of nonculturally responsive teachers, many teachers were observed to have either authoritarian or permissive classroom management styles (Sharroky, 2012). Sharroky describes authoritarian-led classrooms to be “the most traditional philosophy, whereby the primary control of the classroom rests with the teacher. The teacher is literally in charge” (p. 982), and they lack trusting relationships with their students. Permissive classrooms are defined as follows: 

the opposite end of the continuum. Students are not only in control, but they are in control in a way that tends to be negative, confrontational, and creates tension in
the environment of a traditional public school setting. In general, students do not like these classrooms, and administratively, they cannot be tolerated. (p. 982)

In both styles of classroom management, the conditions were not set for a culturally responsive classroom that achieves academic, social, and behavioral success. School Leader B supported these observations when they expressed, “It was kind of shocking to me to see teachers who stand up in front of a group of students who teach and talk about all types of topics and subjects. When you ask them to connect with students or have a five-minute conversation with them about certain things, they’re like, ‘Oh wait, no. I can’t do that.’” In essence, these teachers needed guidance on rapport, relationships, and respect that went both ways since they lacked the natural intuition of cultural and linguistic responsiveness that lends itself to a collaborative and democratic classroom. Their pedagogy and philosophy were not evolving in their relationships with their students and they didn’t know when to be authoritarian and how to be graceful and empathetic about it. Judgements and recommendations will be further explained in the following sections.

**Interpretation**

Through the interpretation of the data, six common themes emerged from each of the four interviews. As stated earlier, the six common themes that emerged through data analysis included core beliefs/past experiences, cultural awareness, awareness of assumptions, modeling necessary for students, modeling necessary for teachers, and the need for strong relationships. “Interpretation goes beyond the data to add context, determine meaning, and tease out substantive significance” (Patton, 2008, p. 478).
Each of the participants made statements that supported these six common threads found in culturally proficient educators, which supported that teachers with a high understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy developed it from their core values, background, and past experiences. The patterns bring to the surface the need for a sense of urgency in valuing and developing the cultural competence in the teachers of Central School District.

**Core Values and/or Past Experiences**

The first theme identified was that each participant had similar core values or past experiences that support a deeper understanding of cultural proficiency and were not explicitly taught. Teacher B stated, “I’ve just had the upbringing that every person is unique in their own way and every person should be accepted,” and

My dad would always say, “You’re friends with everyone. No matter how they look. You take that layer off of appearance and we’re all the same on the inside as far as feelings and have a heart and needs and wants. Then you put a mask on and that’s what makes everybody different, but you take that mask off and everyone is the same underneath.”

School Leader B also reiterated the same empathetic human understanding by explaining, “My parents never pressured me either way. They wanted me to have friends and they didn’t care who the friends were. They wanted them to be just like good people and trustworthy people and they just didn’t care.” Culturally proficient educators have personal values and behaviors that enable them to have positive relationships with the students and communities they serve (Lindsey et al., 2019). These beliefs and behaviors were ingrained in them through family values and upbringing.
Cultural Awareness

The second major theme was the participants’ natural sense of cultural awareness. School Leader A explained, “We all prejudge everybody that we come across. And there’s nothing wrong with that. It’s the acting on the prejudices. I think it starts with recognizing who you are as a person. And I think that takes some self-reflection.” School Leader B further emphasizes:

If we want to teach the whole student, if we want to reach the whole student, then we have to make sure that we’re being respectful of their cultural background and who they are as students. And I think that’s all part of being an educator.

Both school leaders were aware of the critical importance that it is necessary to be aware of yourself and the students. Teacher A also referred to the same thread by stating, Acknowledging your own subtle things that you don’t realize would set the tone. If we’re setting a tone with a bias, an underlying bias that you don’t even realize is there, you’re setting the tone in a very not great place.

Lindsey et al. (2019) support this statement by explaining that, “Cultural Proficiency is a mindset, a way of being, a worldview, and a perspective that are the basis for how one moves about in our diverse society” (p. 5).

Teacher B confirms this mindset by sharing that, I go back to, and strongly believe, teaching is not a one-size-fits-all. I don’t have a clone of students in my class. I have multiple students from multiple backgrounds, from multiple cultures with different personalities, uniqueness in every way, and in order for me to be successful in teaching I have to be culturally aware,
culturally accepting, to learn each person’s background and respect their background and know how to teach.

All four participants embraced the beliefs that culturally sustaining pedagogy “positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1).

Assumptions

Awareness of assumptions, either their own or others, also became apparent through the coding of the interviews. School Leader A vulnerably and honestly addresses both types of assumptions through this eye-opening and teachable moment:

“All right, guys. I need you to use your church voice.” And right after I said it, there was a student who walked up to me and said, “Do you really want us to use our church voices?” And I said, “Yes, please. I need a few minutes of church voice so I can get what I have to get done.” And the class broke out into song and erupted into a celebration. And I wasn’t prepared for that. At that point, she kind of laughed at me. She said, “You asked for a church voice so we’re giving you our church voices. Afterwards it was a laughing experience. We broke out into laughter about our differences. And then we had a conversation about what church voice was for me. It was foreign to most of the students, too. They didn’t go to church to stand, kneel, pray, stand, kneel, pray. They went to church to celebrate and sing. And even the songs that I was taught in my upbringing in childhood for religion were somber in nature, and were organ based.

Culturally proficient educators embrace and reflect upon their life experiences, biases, and stereotypes, to more deeply comprehend from them as they evolve and grow
as educators. This situation could have gone another way that negatively affected an entire classroom as well as the teacher-student relationships necessary to create a culturally responsive classroom environment that is conducive to learning.

**Modeling for Students**

Data analysis of coded and transcribed interviews showed that culturally competent teachers modeled culturally responsive practices for their students. They know the students’ “words, stories educate us about ourselves and others; they capture our attention on a very personal level, and entice us to see, know, desire, imagine, construct, and become more than what we currently are” (Gay, 2018, p. 3). Teacher B addressed this theme by explaining, “Teachers should act like a kid sometimes, and a teacher should just show her true colors, her vulnerability, her fun side and her kid side to tap into children’s minds.”

**Modeling for Adults**

Modeling for adults was the fifth pattern that emerged from the research as well. Data analysis of coded and transcribed interviews showed that it was prevalent that culturally competent school leaders purposefully modeled culturally responsive practices for teachers. Culturally proficient educators all provide spaces and build relationships where diverse students feel recognized, respected, valued, seen, and heard (Gay, 2018).

School Leader A described the following example of modeling for teachers by sharing:

Show staff members all the ways that can be done, lead them to those examples, and then hope they take them . . . reinforce that, support that, recognize that we
see them doing that. And if they’re not, then inserting ourselves into their
classrooms, sitting in their morning meetings and helping connect the students.
School Leader B acknowledges this point as well with the following statement:
Administrators should provide that support to teachers to build those connections
and build those relationships with their students. Sometimes it’s something as
simple as sitting down and being a part of a phone call with a teacher. Showing
them how to reach out to parents.

Relationships

The sixth and final theme identified through participant interviews was
relationships. Relationships between teacher and student, teacher and administrator, as
well as with the school and the families are critical elements in culturally competent
educators. Michael Fullan (2020) discussed Lewin and Regine’s research on “genuine
relationships”:

Actually, most people want to be part of their organization; they want to know the
organization’s purpose; they want to make a difference. When the individual soul
is connected to the organization, people become connected to something deeper—
the desire to contribute to a larger purpose, to feel they are part of a greater whole,
a web of connection. (p. 1264)

Genuine caring relationships are at the heart of culturally responsive pedagogy and
practices. School Leader B stated “teachers who have formed relationships with their
students, I believe have more success in the classroom with the kids,” and “I think that
that all comes back . . . to building relationships.”
Challenges

Major challenges that emerged in Central School District were the lack of professional development in culturally responsive practices for nonculturally proficient teachers, limited curricular and SEL resources and support from district administration, unclear and inconsistent expectations of cultural proficiency, and the lack of a shared understanding and value placed on setting the tone for culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. Lack of a shared vision that had well-defined performance standards for students and teachers (Wagner et al., 2006) had a negative impact on all four arenas analyzed.

Culturally competent teachers and school leaders did not feel supported and were struggling without the resources and support necessary to be culturally responsive educators in order to create an environment where everyone felt validated and affirmed. As a school and district team, they did not have a set of shared beliefs and values revolving around culturally responsive pedagogy and its impact on academic and social emotional learning. They also were unable to set consistent and clear expectations for the rest of the staff and have a deeper understanding and application of cultural proficiency. Consequently, the district was in a place where teachers and administrators did not have a shared vision or a common language and mindset about the need to lay a foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy and practices that encompass academic and social emotional learning in Central School District.

Judgements

The data findings provide insight into the research questions of this study. Currently, educators who are culturally proficient are those who have core beliefs and
past experiences that have shaped their understanding and practice. Culturally proficient educators respect and empower the diversity within their schools and classrooms. School Leader B alludes to this by simply, “Being aware of the students that you teach.” Teacher B elaborates on this philosophy of being cultural aware: “There’s no one-size-fits-all. So, like last year won’t be like this year, won’t be like next year, so you can’t not reflect and change and think about that every single year. . . . It’s like you can’t be one way. You have to constantly be reflecting on it.” Educators need to constantly be affirming and validating each of their students by providing a culturally responsive classroom that will positively affect academic and social, emotional, and behavioral success.

One possible cause of the misalignment between the participants interviewed and issues Central School District faced in correlation with the first question of this study: “To what extent do school leaders and teachers understand and influence culturally relevant practices that support teachers working in school districts serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations?” Was that affected by a lack of a shared belief and shared vision around culturally relevant teaching practices and the support structures necessary to ensure proper professional development? School Leader A shares his personal belief that “Every student is given every chance, every day. And I think that’s the district leader’s responsibility and the school’s responsibility to make that happen,” meaning responsibility of the district, and the district’s culture, context, and competencies, as a collective whole. Michael Fullan (2020) uses Schein’s formal definition of culture:

The culture of a group can be defined as a pattern of shared assumptions as it solves its problems of external adaptations and internal integration, which has
worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 354)

When leading for change and shifting mindsets, it is critical that the collective group share the same vision in order for new and old members to be able commit to the change. Unfortunately, the locus of control currently resides with individual teachers and school leaders rather than being coordinated and facilitated on a broader district level (Milner, 2015).

As a result, in the context of CSD, they lack the vision to consciously work towards reform for underserved students, students of color, and students living in poverty with “deliberate speed,” or with a sense of urgency, and not continue with such a slow rate of progress or by depending on the few naturally culturally relevant teachers to transform and provide an equitable education for the students they served (Milner, 2015). Moreover, the conditions and competencies of the district for nonculturally relevant teaching pedagogy and lack of access to professional development and resources in this area indicate that the value of developing culturally proficient educators is not a current priority for the Central School District.

**Recommendations**

In order for transformational change to occur and mindsets to shift, Central School District needs to, as Fullan (2020) says, “get to the point where organizations proactively challenge the status quo” (p. 404). Furthermore, the district and its leaders must confront the problem that they have not yet successfully addressed (Fullan, 2020): not being able to fully meet the needs of underserved, minority students through the
implementation and development of culturally responsive teaching practices for its teachers.

Lindsey et al. (2019) state, “Changes within organizations take place when people are open and ready for approaches to inequity that address underlying root causes and lead to systemic remedies” (p. 51). To address the inequities caused by the lack of a sense of urgency in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, the district will have to come to a shared agreement and collective collaboration on developing culturally competent teachers. The district’s vision will need to recognize that cultural proficiency “is an inside-out approach to addressing diversity and equity in classrooms, schools, and districts. Cultural Proficiency is an approach that is to be integrated into the culture of the school” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 54). It is not adding another program, but is the foundation of equitably serving all students.

Once a shared vision around culturally responsive pedagogy and practices has been established, the district can address how they will move forward in providing professional development and support for the major process of implementing cultural proficiency. Lindsey et al. (2019) explain the depth of this process:

The process of Cultural Proficiency takes time to surface assumptions, reflect on values and behaviors, examine policies and practices, collect and examine data, and engage in conversations about the next near-term and long-range strategies. These processes need culturally proficient formal and nonformal leaders who have the vision, skill, and will to engage others in collegial discussions and dialogue for the purpose of continued improvement in serving all demographic groups of students. Culturally proficient leaders recognize that change is scary for
some, that it will disturb the status quo, and that there will be barriers to
surmount. They do not view barriers as impossible to overcome—only as factors
that must be taken into account as professional plans for moving forward are
formulated. (p. 54)

District and school leaders will have to formulate a plan to address this process and the
various levels it contains in order to fully commit to building the capacity of its teachers
in cultural proficiency to best support the academic and social emotional needs of the
students. Additional strategies and actions related to these recommendations will be
shared in further detail in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER FIVE

ASSESSING THE 4CS ~ TO-BE

Introduction

Culturally proficient teachers develop their understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices from their personal upbringing and past experiences that have opened their eyes to empathizing and serving others, as well core values that they have intrinsically. Shifting this understanding to those to whom it does not come naturally will require a major shift in mindset, not only for individual teachers, but systematically from the organization as a whole. “Shifting the ethos of a district to one that centers its care around those who are most vulnerable requires leaders to embrace principles that reverberate throughout the entire district (Milner, 2015, p. 31).

Figure 5. To-Be Diagnostic Tool
Envisioning the Success: To-Be

Context of a Shared Understanding

In order to move forward with the implementation and transition of a shift in mindset, a shared understanding and vision in culturally responsive pedagogy must take root within the organization as a whole. Geneva Gay (2018) touches upon this topic within education regarding the need “to deconstruct and transform some longstanding pedagogical assumptions, beliefs, and practices, and to understand and counter opposition” (p. 277). She goes on to say, “Classroom teachers and other educators need to understand what the obstacles are and how they are manifested behaviorally before they can effectively reveal, resist, and resolve them” (p. 277).

Muhammad (2018) says, “As human beings, we do not have the ability to control the thoughts and beliefs of others,” and as leaders we must “become adept at gaining cooperation and skilled in the arts of diplomacy, salesmanship, patience, endurance and encouragement” (p. 25). Through these skills, leaders can work towards building capacity in their staff and establishing strong relationships and a positive school culture that shares the same vision and belief system because “Culture is made up of our values and beliefs” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017, p. 132). The environment becomes one of collaboration and each person knows their role and responsibility in moving the system toward implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and practices.

Teachers cannot reasonably be expected to meet these challenges if they have not been adequately prepared for them. Therefore, both preservice and in-service education agents and agencies must include skills for culturally responsive teaching in their professional development programs for teachers. This is as
crucial to improving the performance of underachieving students of color as is teachers being culturally responsive in K–12 classroom instruction. (Gay, 2018, p. 293-294)

Administrators will model by setting the tone for culturally responsive pedagogy; “Modeling in culturally responsive teaching is a moral imperative and a professional necessity” (Gay, 2018, p. 249). Resources and training in culturally responsive and restorative practices are priorities for the district, and in turn, teachers will commit to and use these practices in their daily teaching to support the academic and social emotional success for all students, which will aid in closing the achievement gap.

Culture of a Shared Vision and Beliefs

School leaders must create a culture and climate of a safe space for the staff as a whole to mindfully reflect on their cultural proficiency, unconscious bias, past experiences, core beliefs, and current understanding of cultural awareness and social/emotional learning. Elena Aguilar states, “When you know yourself well—when you understand your emotions, social identities, core values and personality—you gain clarity on your purpose in life and in work. Being anchored in purpose makes you able to deal with setbacks and challenges” (2018, p. 21). She goes on to state, “Organizations thrive when they have clear, shared values and where practices align with those values” (p. 25), which alludes to the staff having a similar mindset and a set of shared core values that will best support their cultural proficiency and instruction of social/emotional learning.

Building relationships is another critical layer in shifting the culture and implementing culturally responsive practices. “Teachers who genuinely care for students
generate higher levels of all kinds of success than those who do not” (Gay, 2018, p. 60). School Leader A supports this idea: “I’m realizing more and more every day that that is the only thing that really matters, is the relationships that you have with people.” Culturally proficient people do not have to know everything about those who are different, but they do know how to take advantage of the relationships they have with one another and the students they serve, how to build them through teachable moments, asking questions without offending, and through creating an environment that is welcoming to diversity (Lindsey et al., 2019). Teacher A discusses this importance in her practice: “that every single student feels like they’re heard and appreciated and home would be one of my top important priorities.”

As the climate and culture shift and the staff collaborate to share in the collective responsibility to serve all students, the following is important to keep in mind:

Teachers and other educators must have as much faith in the abilities of children to learn as children have in the power of education—and act accordingly. These shared beliefs open the way to improved student performance. But they will not be realized without culturally responsive pedagogical competence. (Gay, 2018, p. 293)

Furthermore, John Hattie’s research on collective responsibility and efficacy describes how it supports an organization in moving forward and found that it consisted of four factors: “shared belief among teachers that they would produce results; primary reason was ‘evidence of impact’; a culture of collaboration to implement high-yield teaching strategies; and a leader who participates in frequent, specific collaboration” (Fullan, 2020, p. 1439).
Through relationship building, commitment by all stakeholders, and a shared vision and set of beliefs, changes within the organization can take place as people embrace and are ready to approach inequities that address underlying root causes in their practice and pedagogy and lead to systemic remedies (Lindsey et al., 2019). “Cultural Proficiency takes the conversation beyond political correctness to a deeper conversation of the abilities people and organizations need to respond to the communities they serve in effective ways” (Estrada, as cited in Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 135). Shifting the district culture will take an overhaul of the system as a whole to prioritize how they are best supporting students through culturally responsive practices to create a set of shared beliefs and a shared vision.

**Conditions that Support Cultural Competence**

In a culture of a shared vision and beliefs around culturally responsive pedagogy, all stakeholders will work towards creating the right conditions for sustained implementation. Central School District and school leaders will provide time and space for building the capacity of teachers in cultural competency. Professional learning communities (PLCs) will be a dedicated and sacred forum to collaborate on meeting the needs of all students. Schedules will reflect weekly planning time specifically for PLCs to practice and learn about culturally relevant teaching practices and examine curricula and resources within the district. Ongoing professional development will be offered to staff in regards to implementing a purposeful integration of culturally relevant curriculum and practices. District committees around curriculum and social emotional learning will provide teachers with a framework and resources around curriculum maps and restorative practices from which schools and teachers can draw guidance in adapting them to meet
the needs of their prospective students. Lastly, the district will work towards a more representative alignment in student and teacher demographics to address the disparity.

**Competencies of Culturally Proficient Teachers**

The competencies of culturally proficient educators must be developed and supported by Central School District. According to Milner’s research (2015), he suggests four goals for district reform that can inform and shape classroom- and school-level work that results in effective teaching practices as stated in Chapter Two. Central School District will adopt the thinking behind the following two goals to inform the competencies of culturally responsive pedagogy and practices from the district level:

1. Understand and practice equitable decision making;
2. Rethink and reform the inflexible, narrowed curriculum.

Through these goals, CSD will examine their current practices in providing teachers and students with what they need, specifically, providing teachers and school leaders with training and support on strategies to assist underserved and minority students. Professional development will not only support their instruction but the resources they use to provide culturally responsive instruction.

School leaders and teachers will receive training on examining what types of resources they use within their instruction. Since teachers and districts have the autonomy to choose their own texts and resources, teachers need support on how to identify literature and curriculum that is conducive to culturally responsive teaching. Once teachers have the resources and understanding of what they use, they can focus on how to use those resources to support a culturally responsive classroom environment.
Professional development on best practice in culturally responsive teaching practices (academic, social, emotional, and behavioral) is also essential to reform. More deeply, they need support in understanding how students’ home and school experiences intersect and need to inform curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student discipline (Milner, 2015). Ongoing professional development and coaching in how to be more patient with students and how to motivate them to learn, how to increase the rigor of instruction and maintain high expectations for all students, how to be dedicated to this work and maintain constant communication with students to truly listen to their needs: These are all critical competencies needed to build teacher capacity.

School Leader B also touches upon the need for collaboration: “I believe in collaborating and reaching out for consultation. I recommend it to everybody. . . . I think that sometimes you get in your own head. You want to make sure that you’re doing right by the student.” Fullan (2020) also discusses how critical teacher collaboration is to the process of educator development: “The difference, they said, was in the exact purpose and nature of collaboration” (p. 1457). Teachers do not distinguish between formal and informal collaboration, and they have candid, deliberative, supportive norms within their PLCs. While collaborating they strive for continuous innovation and improvement, and there is collective analysis and integration of curriculum policy and existing teaching practices. “They collaborate in ways that are responsive to and inclusive of the culture of their students, themselves, the community, and society” (p. 1455). Through intentional collaboration, teachers work together and hold one another accountable to meeting the needs of their students.
Conclusion

Through the four components of Wagner’s Arena of Change (Wagner et al., 2006), Central School District will be able to support a vision of equitable education for all students. The district will make culturally relevant pedagogy and practices a priority through modeling and providing ongoing support for teachers to lay the foundation for the context, culture, conditions, and competencies of teachers in culturally relevant education.
CHAPTER SIX

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Introduction

In this section I will explain the strategies and actions necessary for Central School District to implement in order to move from their current situation and towards supporting CSD teachers in becoming culturally proficient as described in Chapter Five, which is necessary in order to support culturally proficient educators and African American and Latino students for academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success. First, district leaders will have to work towards creating a culture that can work collaboratively towards building a common set of core values, beliefs, and vision towards supporting culturally responsive pedagogy. Next, CSD will implement professional development and ongoing coaching support for culturally responsive teaching practices within professional learning communities. Once the district and teachers have established a strong foundation for culturally relevant pedagogy and practices, they can analyze the curriculum to ensure it supports culturally competent instruction. These three major strategies will provide school leaders with a framework to support culturally proficient teachers.

Establishing a Shared Vision

First, district and school leaders need to begin building a community with a shared vision and beliefs around culturally relevant education. Establishing a culture with strong relationships and emotional resilience will provide the platform to create an open, trusting environment where all can speak, discuss, disagree, and reflect safely in order to move forward in creating a culturally relevant shared vision. Elena Aguilar (2018) states:
Research on resilience has implications for preservice programs, for new teacher support and development, and for the coaching that’s offered to new teachers. This support should have as a central component the cultivation of emotional intelligence, social skills, and communication. You want teachers to build healthy communities with one another. (p. 99)

The district should create a committee with the purpose to establish a vision around culturally responsive pedagogy and practices, with representatives from all stakeholder communities. Within this committee, representatives would learn about culturally responsive pedagogy and practices and how they affect the students and the community. When the district takes the time to collectively establish a shared vision that everyone played a part in creating, and a sense of accountability and lives that vision throughout the district.

The theory of leading for transformational learning and the four pillars that Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStafano, and Asghar explore in *Learning for Leadership* (2013) would help to establish a framework leaders could build upon to support a collaborative and open environment that would be ready for change. The goals of leading for transformational learning are to “raise understanding of the kinds of promising practices that support adult growth and capacity” and a “developmental model that can be used to enhance professional learning initiatives, build more effective learning communities, and support adult development and capacity building in your own context” (p. 33).

Lindsey, Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey (2019) have suggested a few resources that could be used within the committee to help them gain a deeper awareness of where the
district and stakeholders fall along the cultural proficiency continuum (see Appendix A) and how the continuum can be used when an organization is developing a vision. The first resource, Learning Strategy 1: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency, of which the purpose is to identify aspects of the school or district culture that may be barriers to cultural proficiency” (p. 245), which can be found in Appendix G. The second activity that would provide perspective “with resistant groups or with groups that find it hard to grasp the concepts of privilege and entitlement is called, Learning Strategy 2: Describe a Culturally Incompetent Organization,” (p. 248). This resource is located in Appendix H. The resources greatly support leaders in laying the groundwork to move forward with commitment from all stakeholders no matter where they fall in the cultural proficiency continuum. In this context, they would be able to support teachers and other school leaders in the self-reflective process and in the courageous conversations necessary to examine beliefs and lens focused on cultural proficiency, both theirs and the district’s.

Once the staff comes to a consensus on their core beliefs and shared vision, they can identify and focus on the context or purpose of their work. Muhammad (2018) says that organizations, no matter where they are in their journey of creating productive and positive cultures, share three common traits: a common vocabulary, problem-solving conversations among staff, and a high level of efficacy. These traits allow for staff and administrators to work as one cohesive unit that has the students’ best interest at the heart of their work. Muhammad (2018) states that, “The turning point for transforming school culture: the change process begins with the tone of the relationship between the leader and the teachers, which trickles down to affect the relationship between teachers and students” (p. 119). Through creating a shared vision of implementing culturally
responsive practices, strong relationships form among all stakeholders to sustain the implementation of the vision throughout the organization.

**Professional Development through Professional Learning Communities**

In order to continue to build their capacity and cultural competency, leaders begin “employing a collaborative, developmental approach to school and district leadership—as well as leadership development, preparation, and PD—is one promising way to help improve experiences and outcomes for all school participants” (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 13). Through this collaborative approach, teachers can gain knowledge of restorative practices and cultural awareness, which will greatly improve their instruction and lay a solid foundation for organic culturally responsive academic, social, and emotional learning for everyone. Professional development in culturally responsive practices as well as time to reflect on themselves and their instruction—with the support of school leaders—will build their capacity and allow them to take ownership of the roles and responsibilities they have in the organization to ensure that lasting systemic change and cultural shifts take place.

A significant strategy that collaboratively supports a shared vision of culturally relevant teaching practices is Drago-Severson et al.’s (2013) concept of **teaming**. “Teaming brings adults together to engage in dialogue,” (p. 35) and often focuses on team teaching, pairing veteran and new teachers, forming leadership teams (both vertical and horizontal), examining student work, teacher practice, leadership challenges, and/or working collaboratively on reform or improvement initiatives. Researchers contend that teaming builds individual, school, and systemwide capacity for learning and improvement since it builds capacity. (p. 35)
Leaders should use the elements of this pillar to create effective and targeted professional learning communities (PLCs) across their districts to examine cultural proficiency and instructional practices, as well as address core beliefs and bias for teachers to increase cultural proficiency and examine the current curriculum and resources. Through *teaming*, leaders empower teachers to create and maintain a culture of empathy, collaboration, and a common language around cultural proficiency.

Using PLCs to strategically reinforce teaming is a critical component to support targeting culturally responsive professional development as well as raising cultural proficiency levels. The PLC environment supported by the school culture enables the creation of context, conditions, competencies, and culture that are safe for the teachers to examine themselves and their beliefs and how they affect their classrooms. Furthermore, it also allows analysis of their personal development, i.e., current practices, identify bias, diversity awareness, and identification of ongoing professional development, that includes feedback and input from the teachers themselves to the support staff. This empowers leaders and teachers to find ways to restore relationships among them to work collaboratively with the same mission and vision in mind. In this sense, everyone will be held accountable for the collective agreement as they will have a sense of ownership and commitment to its success.

Within the PLC, teams would develop short-term and long-term goals for development of their cultural proficiency in regards to their personal and group identity and moving through the cultural proficiency continuum (Lindsey et al., 2019.) School and teacher leaders must “establish and model the conditions for supporting adult learning and development so that the learners could experience the practices that support
growth while they were learning about them” (Drago-Severson et al., 2013, p. 12). Being able to identify where the team and individual teachers fall along the continuum will help leaders to determine professional development and coaching needs as they learn and grow as a cohesive whole.

PLCs are also a space where teachers can help one another plan and create classroom environments where all students are at the center. The learning environment of PLCs provides equitable opportunities for teachers and students to “voice co-creation, social construction and self-discovery,” (Kallick & Zmuda, 2017, p. 17) and allows teachers to provide equitable instruction while empowering students and teachers to maintain a strong emotional resilience. Through professional development and support from administration, culturally responsive and restorative practices become norms and are consistently upheld throughout the entire school.

**Curriculum Analysis**

Once teachers solidly understand culturally relevant pedagogy and how it is incorporated into their teaching practices, they, along with district representatives, will need to examine the curriculum and resources used. Milner (2015) identifies four instructional reforms for schools and teachers to adopt at the school level that work towards transforming the deep shift in mindset required. The four reforms:

- Infuse language arts across the curriculum
- Build and sustain meaningful relationships
- Develop teachers’ knowledge and skills beyond the academic content
- Teach and cultivate student social, organizational, and study skills. (p. 78)
As teachers reflect and deepen their understanding of the reforms, schools can work towards success and improvement in the organization as a whole. Language and literacy are foundational to academic and social success, which empowers students to perform better across the board (Milner, 2015). Culturally relevant texts can be utilized across various subjects and topics. Nonculturally proficient teachers will be adequately supported as they build their teacher tool kit and deepen their understanding of culturally relevant teaching pedagogy and practices to enable them to examine curriculum and resources that support culturally relevant instruction.

As teachers build their cultural competence, they can begin to develop a lens to look closer at the curriculum and resources they use daily and create curriculum maps that support culturally relevant instruction. Considering that culturally relevant text is not easily provided, teachers “must actively plan to supplement the state-mandated anthologies with culturally responsive texts” (Sharroky, 2012, p. 1328). While teachers examine the curriculum maps, they can also provide suggested texts that give students a wide array of various cultures to support and increase their cultural awareness. Teachers can examine texts to identify which of the following categories they fall into:

_Culturally specific texts_ authentically illuminate the experience of the group culturally and not racially. The text realistically taps into the norms, mores, traditions, customs, and beliefs of the culture in focus. There may be a stress on the history of racial discrimination and strife, the struggle for freedom, and an emphasis on racial or cultural pride.

_Culturally generic texts_ feature characters that are members of racial minority groups. However, the selections contain few, if any, details that define
characters culturally. The characters, plots, and themes blandly reflect America’s “common cultural ground” without exercising any depth to reveal the cultural diversity found in culturally specific texts. In effect, the text could be about anybody, regardless of race or culture, with the exception being the focus on national culture.

*Culturally neutral books* are the least, if at all, culturally responsive and are not recommended as appropriate books. These feature characters and themes that are about people of color but fundamentally are about something else. This type includes informational books that show people from diverse backgrounds engaged in activities from commonly told stories but with different faces. The best examples of these books are traditional fairy and folk tales. For example, Mary Had a Little Lamb becomes Monique Had a Little Lamb, where the female main character is literally black faced, with nothing being different about her other than her color. (Sharroky, 2012, p. 1338)

LeMoine (1999), as cited in Sharroky (2012) suggests that while teachers examine texts, they should also think about the following:

- Choose well-known authors, illustrators, publishers, and sellers who have already developed solid reputations for producing culturally appropriate materials.
- Critically analyze how the characters are portrayed in the story, how the facts are presented, and in what context they are presented.
- Evaluate factual information for accuracy.
• When applicable, analyze the author’s use of nonstandard language for authenticity and thoroughness.

• Carefully examine the illustrations for appeal, ethnic sensitivity, and authenticity. (p. 1349)

Using Sharroky and LeMoine’s recommendations, Central School District and its teachers will be able to improve their current curriculum and provide equitable, culturally relevant instruction for all students.

To summarize these research-based strategies and actions, the following Strategies and Actions chart was created. The chart outlines the structure of purposeful and strategic planning for school level and district level leaders to contemplate when seeking to transform teacher practices and provide educators with an equitable and culturally proficient lens.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. *Create a deeper understanding and shared vision with a set of core beliefs around culturally responsive pedagogy and practices within the district* | 1. Create a committee with the purpose of establishing a deeper understanding and vision around culturally responsive pedagogy and practices with representatives from all stakeholder communities.  
   a. Learning Strategy 1: Barriers to cultural proficiency  
      i. Purpose: To identify aspects of the school or district culture that may be barriers to cultural proficiency  
   b. Learning Strategy 2: Describe a culturally incompetent organization  
      i. Purpose: To use with resistant groups or with groups that find it hard to grasp the concepts of privilege and entitlement |
| 2. *Professional Development through Professional Learning Communities* | 2. Through teaming in PLCs, teachers and school leaders will work together to develop their cultural proficiency.  
   a. Focus professional development on developing cultural proficiency at the school level  
   b. Support personal development  
   c. Develop short-term and long-term goals in buildings for individuals and teams around cultural proficiency.  
   d. PLC inquiry cycles to support goal achievement and accountability in implementing culturally responsive practices |
   a. Grade-Level PLC teams review and revise curriculum maps to support culturally responsive instruction  
   b. Grade-Level PLC teams review and revise current resources, i.e., suggested text that support culturally responsive instruction |
Conclusion

Lasting systemic change must be done through the creation of a shared vision. Gruenert and Whitaker (2017) allude to this idea, “Whether considering the classroom, school, or district culture, collaboration and connection among staff plays an important role” because “we have to find ways to build connections and trust so that the knowledge of a few can become the knowledge of many” (p. 73). Central School District will accomplish this through the creation of a shared vision of developing and supporting cultural proficiency, professional development and professional learning communities, and curriculum analysis.
CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY

Introduction

The goal of this study was to determine how school leaders can support teachers in developing cultural proficiency and applied practices to best support underserved students. In this section, I recommend an equity initiative policy that will support current practicing teachers with ongoing professional development and coaching to implement and analyze culturally responsive practices and curricula to meet the needs for all students. Central School District will have to consider the necessary actions in moving forward to support teachers within their professional development and professional learning communities to intentionally support culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. Program evaluation is imperative to develop culturally responsive pedagogy and practices that will be critical to best meeting the needs of all students, especially those who are underserved, in order to eliminate the disparities enabled by the opportunity gap.

Policy Statement

The following policy advocacy will address the need for an equity initiative that will require professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices to address and eliminate opportunity gaps in the educational system at the district, state, and federal levels. It will focus on developing a requirement for schools and districts to organize systems designed to achieve the following [adapted from the Commitment to Equity / D65 Equity Policy (n.d.):
1. Ensure that all staff members, with deliberate intention, examine and eliminate institutional beliefs, policies, practices, and teaching that perpetuate racial disparities in achievement and regularly implement culturally responsive pedagogy and practices;

2. Prepare *all* students to succeed in a multicultural and global society to reach their full academic and social potential through culturally relevant curricula, as well as supporting teachers in identifying and accessing culturally relevant curriculum;

3. Mandate ongoing professional development and coaching in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices to cultivate educators’ cultural competency.

Building an equity vision and framework will develop, support, implement, and require districts to eliminate the opportunity gaps in education quality, policies, and support for all students. First, an equity policy can create a framework that guides targeted and specific professional development within professional learning communities that encompass culturally responsive practices and a deeper understanding of how to provide equitable educational opportunities. Second, this policy recommendation advocates for a state- and school-level requirement for districts and schools to identify, create, and provide professional development for use in identifying curriculum and resources related to culturally relevant teaching and learning. Lastly, this policy recommendation calls for state policy makers to require that districts and schools design and provide a comprehensive school-wide professional learning framework for all staff that builds the capacity of teachers’ cultural competence.
Needs Analysis

The conclusions drawn from this research suggest that significant requirements through state mandates require guidance that will be provided for the creation of staff development to improve student learning and cultural competency. In analyzing the adaptations, there are considerations for additional areas of focus related to the proposed changes, including educational, political, social, legal, moral, ethical, and economic areas.

Educational Analysis

Teachers in Central School District need specific guidance and support in order to best serve all students. Lack of required proper teacher preparation and/or professional development in the understanding and building of cultural awareness has negatively affected student achievement and the creation of a strong foundation for social emotional learning. In his research, Dr. Anthony Muhammad (2015) determined that there is substantial evidence to support the theory that our personal views are shaped by our life experiences, and those views have an impact on student achievement. This is particularly true when it comes to the issues of race and poverty. (p. 496)

Without providing teachers the proper support and forums to analyze and synthesize their past experiences and biases, we as educators will continue to perpetuate inequality.

In reviewing the requirements of students pursuing elementary education majors at Illinois State University (2019; see Appendix I), no classes are currently being offered that directly prepare teachers in diversity or cultural proficiency (except in relation to English language learners), nor are any courses offered that directly address social
emotional learning. We cannot expect that teachers come to school with the background necessary to be culturally proficient teachers in diverse classrooms without the proper education and exposure to these topics. Another point to consider would be analysis of the authors of the books teacher candidates are reading as they go through their programs. Knowing that we serve a diverse community of learners, our moral and ethical duty is to provide professional development that will “bridge gaps in understanding and perceptions so that we can collectively find a common solution” (Muhammad, 2015, p. 508). This lack of teacher coursework preparation only further increases the urgency in the need for school districts to implement required professional development in culturally relevant pedagogy and practices, as well as ongoing support for teachers.

This policy supports equity in the educational system and would require school districts to offer professional development for current practicing teachers to study culturally responsive pedagogy and practices, which will purposefully address both academic and social emotional instruction. The study of cultural awareness should assist teachers in gaining perspective on its impact on student achievement and social emotional learning, which will ensure schools do not become a part of a system that perpetuates inequality. If the United States of America was founded on the basic belief that “all men are created equal,” and our actions prove otherwise policy must be created to combat past practice and promote equality through a deeper understanding of being a culturally proficient educator.

Topics to be addressed through professional learning communities (PLCs) will include but not be limited to understanding critical race theory, explicit and implicit bias, and culturally responsive strategies to ensure inclusive classroom environments designed
for all students. Fullan (2020) states, “The difference, they said, was in the exact purpose and nature of collaboration” (p. 1457), which causes districts to ponder the impact of the PLCs and their work and how best to use this time to most effectively support professional development. Currently, CSD provides weekly dedicated common plan time for teachers to participate in PLCs, but the district also needs to direct a shift requiring the implementation of inquiry cycles that focus on the best practices of culturally responsive pedagogy and practices during PLCs. “When we use an equity lens and we engage with our colleagues on complicated and complex problems of equity, we are creating the conditions to support all students and for real, transformational, sustainable change to take hold” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 35).

Political and Legal Analysis

Unfortunately, not all systems require policies, and equity policies are not currently required at the state and district levels. According to the CPS Equity Framework, “Fair policies and systems promote equitable opportunities to reach equal positive academic and socioemotional outcomes for all student and stakeholder groups with an emphasis on those who are most impacted by structural inequality and inequity” (2019, p. 28). Essentially, we need to redesign our systems and policies to meet the needs of America’s underserved students.

In a larger context, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002 was a first step in addressing the inequities perpetuated within the educational system. However, simply holding schools accountable for meeting state standards did not get to the root of how to address ingrained inequities. The Obama administration in December of 2015 worked to
improve upon NCLB with the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which addressed equity in school systems. A few important highlights of this law:

- Advances equity by upholding critical protections for America’s disadvantaged and high-need students.
- Requires—for the first time—that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers.
- Sustains and expands this administration’s historic investments in increasing access to high-quality preschool.
- Maintains an expectation that there will be accountability and action to effect positive change in our lowest-performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

Though many states and school districts have benefited from the funding this law provides by basing it on need rather than other elements, the law does not require districts to look more closely and examine their own equity policies.

In order to examine policies and systems, one must consider who is burdened by past and present inequitable policies and practices and, more specifically, who benefits from them. For states and school districts to create a framework that addresses the impact of inequities, they must also determine how to promote equitable access and opportunities for all students. Since policies, or the lack thereof, and systems affect classrooms, schools, and districts, it is critical to identify connections between the
policies and systems for transformation to take place. “All policies and systems should be continuously improved with equity at the center” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 28).

**Social Analysis**

This policy is being recommended in order to face the fact that racism is a social and endemic part of American society. It is imperative that teachers become aware that “gaps in opportunity are driven by differences in how students are situated in relation to the educational system and the universal goal” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019). Building teacher cultural competence will allow them “the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one’s own; the skill to navigate cross-cultural differences” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 230). Through professional development and PLCs, teachers will learn to recognize assets in students who come from different cultural backgrounds. As Aguilar (2018) pointed out, depending on the diversity of the classroom, examples such as understanding that eye contact has different meanings in different cultures, that we must validate students’ background through the selection of curriculum that broadens their lens to other cultures in order to see themselves in the texts, and appreciate the contributions of students from different cultures.

Requiring educator professional development that is targeted towards building cultural proficiency will give teachers a space to safely look at themselves, their classrooms, lessons, and students, with a broader lens. Currently educators are taught how to differentiate instruction based on instructional levels, i.e., reading level, however from my experiences as a teacher and as a school leader, we never ask teachers to modify or purposely design their instruction or lessons based on the “cultural needs” of the
students. Teachers do not have to ensure their texts are varied and include all cultures at the district or state levels. On the other hand, teachers do not have access to a wide variety of diverse literature. According to Sarah Park’s, “Diversity in Childrens’ Books 2018 Infographic” (2019), 50% of characters in children’s literature are White, 27% are animals/other, 10% are African/African American, 7% are Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American, 5% is Latinx, and 1% are American Indian/First Nations (see Appendix J). This only increases the demand to educate teachers and raise their cultural proficiency as well as support students in understanding cultures that are different from their own. Faced with the increasing need for diversity in children’s literature, we are slowly seeing the availability of these texts increase. Policy that supports equity will have a positive impact on not only educator cultural competency, but also the need for a society as whole to see diversity reflected in literature itself.

The United States of America is filled with multiple races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Also in America, there are biases, there is racism, and there is a strong misunderstanding of one another. These issues are prevalent in communities across the country with deeply rooted feelings that have the ability to cause strong emotions. Dr. Muhammad (2015) explains this concept:

Race seems to be the most illogical factor regarding the achievement gap, and it strikes the heaviest emotional chord. . . . What makes this even more troubling is that race is deemed a social construct. A social construct is a mechanism, phenomenon, or category that develops meaning for individuals or groups through social practice. Therefore, although a person’s race (Black, Latino, White, and so on) is genetic, people’s ideas and perceptions of that race are socially constructed.
In essence, race is only a figment of our imagination. It only has value in our minds and in our social systems. So, race cannot be the problem; the problem must be our perception about race and how race has played out in our society historically in a concept called racism. (p. 435)

These social constructs, people’s perceptions, are what stand in the way of achieving cultural proficiency and raising student achievement. Unfortunately, we have not designed and purposefully implemented a forum to build the capacity of educators so they can truly look at themselves, at their families, at their experiences, at their communities, and honestly analyze the social constructs that shape our perceptions of one another.

Equity in education and educational practices is yet another reason supporting teachers in building their cultural awareness and understanding of social emotional learning is critical. Aguilar (2018) surmises:

We all have a responsibility to boost our cultural competence for the sake of our relationships with each other and with kids and their families, and to serve children’s academic and social-emotional needs. Without cultural competence, we won’t be able to build healthy, beloved communities and fulfill our purpose of educating young people. (p. 110)

As educators, it is critical that we set the stage to support not only our teachers and students, but our society as a whole. Supporting and educating teaching cultural awareness will allow us to educate ourselves as well as our students from the moment they enter a classroom which will lay the groundwork in combatting the social construct of systemic racism and its impact on American society.
Moral and Ethical Analysis

It is critical that teachers are provided the forum and framework to examine systemic oppression and equity. One way to begin this process is to use the lens of liberatory thinking, which can be defined as “the reimagining of one’s assumptions and beliefs about others and their capabilities by interrupting internal beliefs that undermine productive relationships and action” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 22). Liberatory thinking challenges people to go beyond changing their mindset, but to be able to create concrete opportunities for others to experience liberation. “Liberatory thinking pushes us to think about what we want for students as a result of equity—beyond only working to stop the negative consequences of inequity” (p. 22).

In practice, the CPS Equity Framework (2019) suggests the following strategies:

- Broaden how they interpret data to be inclusive of student experiences instead of creating exclusionary practices.
- Engage in deep reflective work to understand their biases, multiple intersecting identities, and personal stories.
- Examine how they have been impacted by systemic oppression and may inadvertently be perpetuating systemic oppression.
- Disrupt historical ways of using data on assessment outcomes to compare students to dominant groups.
- Develop individual and systemic equity purpose statements to guide decision-making.
- Build relationships in affinity and across difference to lead change toward greater equity.
● Advocate for fair treatment and opportunities for others.

● Engage in courageous conversations on racial equity, internal biases, systemic inequities, and system redesign, including rethinking how they use data and how data impacts student experiences.

● Manage privilege and bias by acknowledging and mitigating their personal bias.

● Set conditions for safe/brave spaces where both healing and interruption can occur. (p. 23)

For current practicing educators as well as continued support for new teachers, it will be imperative for districts to encourage these types of practices to support teachers in broadening their equity lens through providing professional development through PLCs. “We must find the courage to get curious and possibly surface emotions and emotional experiences that people can’t articulate or that might be happening outside their awareness” (Brown, 2019, p. 67). Providing a space where a leader can model the vulnerability necessary to have conversations about equity and shifting mindsets will not only build their capacity, but build a team of educators willing to address sensitive topics in the best interest of their students and community.

Children need to be explicitly taught how to see outside of themselves. They need to be taught how to be kind, take turns, employ empathy, and understand one another. We cannot assume children come to school with this knowledge. We need to ensure our teachers are able to model and teach these concepts so we can begin to be proactive and teach those ideas at a young age, provide other perspectives, and broaden the way we think about one another, rather than waiting for students to learn as they grow without the
proper guidance and see through the singular lens of what is around them, especially for those who do not live in diverse communities or classrooms.

**Economic Analysis**

The lack of cultural proficiency has a financial burden as well. It contributes to staff instability as they do not have the knowledge or awareness to support a diverse group of students, which will in turn negatively affect student learning. Aguilar (2018) explains that high teacher turnover rates at schools already make it difficult to be consistent as they are not equipped with knowledge to meet the needs of their students. It places roadblocks with the implementation of programs like social emotional learning, contributes to issues of trust among staff, and ultimately can negatively affect the culture and climate of the school. From a financial perspective, it makes sense to provide resources and professional development on building the cultural proficiency of teachers to avoid teacher burnout, professionally and emotionally.

Elena Aguilar (2018) compiled research on the financial burden of teacher burnout and turnover costs:

It is estimated that teacher turnover costs school districts upwards of $2.2 billion per year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014) and the cost of replacing a teacher in an urban district exceeds $20,000 per teacher (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). For site administrators, turnover rates may be comparable, particularly in urban areas, but the data is not systematically collected as it is for teacher attrition. (p. 4)
Incorporating PLCs to support ongoing professional development not only eases that financial burden but also has an extremely positive impact as Odden (2012) references how PLCs that are suggested in this policy recommends:

The way to change culture in a school and get a more uniform deployment of effective instructional practice into all classrooms was to organize teachers into collaborative teams to work together on an ongoing basis using student data to engage in the cycle of continuous instructional improvement . . . using student data to constantly improve teaching practice while focusing on both individual and class learning needs. (p. 20)

Furthermore, Odden (2012) goes on to explain, “Once a school is staffed, organizing teachers into collaborative groups requires no additional resources” (p. 21). Financially this is a positive, but possible pushback from teachers and proper training on how PLCs function effectively and productively could negatively impact this plan which will be further addressed in the Implications for Staff and Community Relations section.

As school leaders and staff members work together to build each other’s capacity in collaborative professional learning communities, they are able to grow and empower one another to implement a culturally responsive framework that supports best practices in a financially responsive system.

**Implications for Staff and Community Relations**

Courageous conversations within collaborative professional learning communities will begin the process of “improving the ways in which we work, grow, and learn together in school systems and shaping them to be learning centers—mentoring communities” for all staff (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 276). These types of conversations
and professional development will take time and may involve pushback, as everyone is likely to be in various places along the cultural proficiency continuum (see Appendix A), but it is well worth the investment. It will essentially change the way we think, as well as build our emotional resilience.

Resilience is, as Elena Aguilar explains, what is important is “how we weather the storms in our lives and rebound after something difficult,” and since “change is a given in life; how you respond is within your control” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 8). Aguilar goes on to say, “Resilience also enables us to have difficult conversations—and if we aren’t having difficult conversations in our efforts to transform schools, we’re probably not making meaningful progress” (p. 13). Courageous conversations and a foundation of resilience create the space for lasting transformational change, which, as this policy recommends, can be purposefully accomplished with PLCs. We have to support educators in how to respond and create classroom environments where we not only build our own cultural awareness, but the cultural awareness of students through explicit instruction and open discussions around the various aspects of equity.

Building relational trust is essential to this process. Trust fosters the organizational conditions to make it more conducive for individuals to implement and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect school improvement and a culturally proficient system (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Principals will need to foster relationships with their teachers in order for teachers to then model that behavior with one another and students. A lack of relational trust and shared teacher leadership could halt the progress of implementation of this policy so setting aside funds for PLC coaching and stipends for teachers leaders would be worth considering. School leaders should work to build
relational trust through shared leadership because “When teachers lead, they help create an environment that influences the entire school community (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p. 91). Supporting teacher leadership will in turn build relational trust among school community members as well as lay the foundation for inclusive partnerships.

Inclusive partnerships are another critical component needed in order “to bring together and engage diverse individuals from educational institutions, communities, caregivers, and families to collectively create solutions and build trust that mitigate or solve complicated or complex problems,” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 24). The CPS Equity Framework goes on to explain:

Inclusive partnerships recognize culture and differences as assets and prioritize three key stakeholder groups:

- People with institutional or historical memory,
- People most impacted by decisions, and
- People responsible for implementing and driving change. (p. 24)

At the heart of inclusive partnerships, we must bring together various groups of “diverse stakeholders to be engaged in authentic, collaborative experiences and develop bottom-up solutions to complex and challenging issues” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 24). These partnerships should include various representatives from the following groups: students, caregivers, school and district staff, volunteers, community organizations, research organizations, and funders in the community. All partners from various stakeholder groups must commit to “sharing power and responsibility as they move toward greater equity. This requires inviting and allowing students, families,
caregivers, and underrepresented employee groups to speak about their needs to inform improvement efforts” (p. 24).

The CPS Equity Framework (2019) suggests on page 25 several strategies to bridge internal and external stakeholder inclusive partnerships. They highly encourage that schools and districts consider the following when building inclusive partnerships:

- Prioritize the perspectives and voices of stakeholders with institutional and/or historical memory, those most affected by inequitable decisions, and those responsible for implementing and driving change.
- Shift from a competitive to a cooperative mindset to productively address conflict, promote healing, and rebuild trust, using tools like meeting norms, with much greater transparency in service of students.
- Speak with diverse stakeholders to understand how culture, differences, and lived experiences can be used as assets.
- Engage in ongoing listening to co-construct change to ensure underrepresented students and adults are heard and their input is valued.
- Elevate student voice data and opportunities across the organization to understand their classroom and school experiences, and inform adult practice.
- Keep students at the center and make decisions based on the best interest of students.
- Embrace families and community members as allies who engage and inform student learning opportunities, including continuous dialogue about how they can be allies and assets inside and outside of school.
• Set high, clear expectations for all parties to promote trust and transparency.

This policy recommendation sets the tone to require a framework that supports the collective responsibility of the professional learning of adults to be an essential element. This can be accomplished through participation from all staff in a collaborative and supportive professional learning community that is required and supported by district and state mandates. This can be accomplished through intentional, ongoing professional development through PLCs. This framework should include a district- or school-level plan for teachers to use inquiry cycles to vet strategies that support culturally responsive pedagogy and practices, which will contribute to the formation of increased collaboration and social camaraderie as a staff.

**Conclusion**

Professional development and the collaborative process of professional learning communities (PLCs) and building cultural proficiency will provide a forum for educators to delve into their social constructs and how they affect teaching. Focusing on using the platform PLCs provide, along with a willingness to change and have courageous conversations around equity, educators can create a framework that builds cultural competence, addresses and analyzes curricula, and creates a sense of urgency to implement policies that address equity.

As educators we must “shift from a competition to cooperation mindset to productively address conflict, promote healing, and rebuild trust, using tools like meeting norms, with much greater transparency in service of students” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 25) and have discussions with “diverse stakeholders to understand how culture,
differences, and lived experiences can be used as assets” (p. 25). We have the ability and moral responsibility to “apply an equity lens that enables us to see and understand all of the structures and conditions at work, and it helps us see what is necessary and possible in terms of what can change to support equity” (p. 31). It is essential that we have a more critical awareness and lens to intentionally support a diverse and equitable educational system that provides ongoing support for teachers.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The goal of this program evaluation was to assess how school leaders can support teachers in becoming culturally proficient in Central School District. Through four in-depth interviews (two with culturally proficient school leaders and two with culturally proficient teachers) six themes were identified that support cultural competence. These themes were used to present opportunities to explore the implications of the following research questions for school districts seeking to address equity initiatives and cultivating culturally proficiency in teachers:

- To what extent do school leaders and teachers understand and influence culturally relevant practices that support teachers working in school districts serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations?
- What programs and opportunities can be provided to educational stakeholders that foster cultural proficiency?
- What role does cultural proficiency play in improving social emotional learning (SEL) and teaching and learning?

From the program evaluation, the significantly more complex issue of equity emerged. It became apparent through the analysis of themes in policy, or lack thereof, are related to equity and cultural proficiency. Several components were deemed necessary when seeking to systematically improve the quality of equitable teaching pedagogy and practices in the district.
These components were developed from analyzing data from the study and the research gathered of culturally responsive pedagogy and practices in the areas of professional development and professional learning communities (PLCs). Based on the 4 Cs framework by Wagner et al. (2006), the study was centered around context, culture, conditions, and competencies. In this analysis, the following three components guided a framework for school districts to consider when seeking to implement equitable and culturally competent teaching practices: context of shared understanding, culture of shared vision and beliefs, conditions that support cultural competence, and competencies for culturally proficient teachers. At the heart of these elements of culturally responsive pedagogy and practices, was the central theme of equity that encompasses collective responsibility, collaboration, and transformation of our mindset into what an equitable education requires: “We must give ourselves the space and time to learn, innovate, and develop so that we can do the same for our students” (CPS Equity Framework, 2019, p. 31). This theme creates a sense of urgency in the need for systematic transformation in schools and districts across all elements related to equity and culturally responsive teaching and learning for all students.

**Discussion**

This program evaluation highlighted the importance of focusing on equity, which had the larger goal of developing a framework of effective, intentional, and research-based teacher practices that improve cultural proficiency in educators. Blankstein and Noguera (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016) state in their book *Excellence through Equity*, “To achieve excellence through equity, we need to maintain our focus on teaching and learning; engage in the courageous conversations about culture, be transparent with our
community, and empower our stakeholders” (p. 257) in order to address the inequities within the educational system.

In order to meet the goal of implementing systemic and sustainable culturally relevant practices and beliefs, I created a framework that guides each area that requires transformation. Starting with an in-depth analysis of the current reality in Central School District, I created a guide for CSD to attain the envisioned concept of building the capacity of teachers’ cultural proficiency. The framework includes action steps along the continuum of three phases identified by Wagner et al., (2006) of preparing, envisioning, and enacting, with each step laying the foundation for improvements across the 4Cs.

These steps include creating a shared vision and understanding around culturally responsive pedagogy, providing focused professional development for teachers within professional learning communities, analyzing curriculum and resources for cultural relevance, and promoting equity among all stakeholders within the community. To further support the changes recommended in the framework, I developed an equity policy. This policy prioritizes culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching practices as well as ensuring an equitable education for all students within CSD.

Since no specific policy on equity exists at the district and state levels, I advocate for creating one that addresses several action steps from the framework that can be seen in the Strategies and Actions Chart located in Chapter Six. The chart suggests that all CSD stakeholders collaborate to create a shared vision around cultural proficiency, professional development in cultural competence within professional learning communities (PLCs), and curriculum analysis.
Specifically, this equity policy will also ensure that all staff members are to intentionally examine and eliminate institutional beliefs, policies, practices, and teaching that perpetuate racial disparities in achievement and regularly implement culturally responsive pedagogy and practices (Commitment to Equity/D65 Equity Policy, n.d.). The policy must also require districts to prepare all students to succeed in a multicultural and global society to reach their full academic and social potential through culturally relevant curricula as well as supporting teachers in identifying and accessing culturally relevant curriculum. Lastly, it will mandate ongoing professional development and coaching in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices to cultivate educators’ cultural competency.

Through deliberate and intentional training on equity and research-based culturally responsive instructional practices, culturally relevant curricula, and ongoing teacher training on culturally competent teaching practices, the policy addresses the organizational framework by encouraging and supporting growth and transformation in cultural proficiency for teachers, as well as supporting focused, professional development within PLCs for them.

**Leadership Lessons**

Throughout this study, I have learned multiple key leadership lessons. The two main lessons revolve around transformational leadership, my role in advocating for cultural proficiency in education, and a deeper understanding of the equities and inequities that exist within the educational system and our society as a whole. Each leadership lesson has shaped me as a leader and empowered me to further explore my influence as a practicing school leader. Wagner et al. (2006) concludes:
When leaders undertake both the organizational and personal journeys concurrently, the chances for success for all students are greatly enhanced. Each involves risks, as well as potential rewards. Each requires leaders to think and act in substantially new ways. (p. 191)

When we as school leaders tackle something as large and comprehensive as equity, we recognize that the road ahead is long and hard. However, as a transformational leader, we do not allow obstacles to hinder us in doing what is best for our students and communities.

From this study, my understanding of what transformational change takes has changed exponentially and proven even more the urgency of the work that needs to be accomplished. As Wagner et al. (2006) describes the deep interconnections between a districts’ outward agenda and our own personal learning journeys, we as school leaders must uphold a culture of high expectations. Building level and central office administrators must be involved in instruction and collaborate with all stakeholders in creating a shared vision. We must foster and explain a sense of urgency for needed change and we need transformational leaders and administrative teams who will lead the improvement process to create the school and district we envision that is based on equity and promotes cultural proficiency.

I recognize that my role will be to lead and model courageous conversations around equity and cultural proficiency. I must be able to advocate and lead teachers to “learn to how to recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies” (Gay, 2018, p. 1), not only within professional learning communities, but in the organizational system as a whole. Furthermore, Michal Fullan
(2020) concludes that, “The world is currently going down an extremely challenging path—one that calls for urgent, joint action that has leading in a culture of change as its common theme of salvation and flourishing” (p. 2573).

**Conclusion**

In the words of Maya Angelo, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.” Providing an equitable education is our ethical and moral obligation, and we know better. Our students cannot wait for their teachers to be comfortable in addressing inequities and race, they need us to address it now and we need to provide the forum for teachers to be able to do so. As we better understand what students need, we can develop the practices that will best support all students in reaching their full potential in an inclusive and equitable school environment.

In closing, we cannot be afraid to face issues of race, gender, religion, and equity. Being a transformational leader means being vulnerable and leading the way to force our educational system to face its historical and ingrained thread of structural racism. Brene Brown (2019) reiterates this message with Joseph Campbell’s wisdom:

>The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek. Own the fear, find the cave, and write a new ending for yourself, for the people you’re meant to serve and support, and for your culture. Choose courage over comfort. Choose whole hearts over armor. And choose the great adventure of being brave and afraid. At the exact same time. (p. 272)

We must advocate and fight for not only our students, but for one another. It just takes one, one courageous individual; let it start with you.
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Appendix A

Cultural Proficiency Continuum

Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Lindsey, Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2019):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pre-Proficiency</th>
<th>Pre-Competence</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to eliminate the cultures of others in all aspects of the school</td>
<td>See the difference; Stomp it out</td>
<td>See the difference; Make it wrong</td>
<td>See the difference; Act like you don't</td>
<td>See the difference; Understand the difference that difference makes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural Proficiency Continuum**

Ratings on the continuum are situational. An individual or organization might be at one point in one situation, but at a different point in a different situation. It is better to look at the continuum in terms of a variety of situations or contexts to get a full picture of opportunities for greater cultural proficiency.

**Examples**

- Belief in the superiority of your culture
- Behavior that disrespects another's culture
- Dislike or suppressive fear of those different from the dominant group
- Guilt over limited opportunities and often resulting in learned helplessness
- Windows dressing and "tokenism" to see that no problem exists
- Less blatant but still extreme microaggressions
- Belief that "their" don't value education
- Blatant and extreme microaggressions

- Policies, belief, or practice that ignores existing differences, or deems them inconsequential
- All people are the same and should be treated equally
- Celebrate diversity by focusing on foods, dress, and languages
- Lived experience to judge others
- Discourage meaningful involvement from diverse groups
- Communication is mostly one-way and in English
- Least blatant but still extreme microaggressions
- Describe students as members of subgroups

- Educators seem to under-servicing students and needing to change practice to better meet needs
- Phase 1: Engage proactively with other cultures but can lead to microaggressions due lack of understanding
- Phase 2: Linking old embedded assumptions takes time and is best done by working with colleagues who give substantive feedback
- Phase 3: Engage in dialog is best done by working with colleagues who give substantive feedback
- Phase 4: Engage in dialog is best done by working with colleagues who give substantive feedback
- Assist students in becoming more engaged in dialog is best done by working with colleagues who give substantive feedback
- Promote the agendas of some groups if they support the status quo

- Advocate for being increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of all cultural groups
- Know how to learn and teach about other groups in a way that honors them
- Foster parents and community members participate in dialog in important school decisions
- Capitalize on teachable moments
- Ask questions without offending
- Create an environment that welcomes diversity
- Seek to add to the knowledge base by conducting research & developing new approaches
Appendix B

CLR Learning Environment Survey

CLR Learning Environment Survey (Sharroky, 2012):

Teacher ____________ Grade/Class ____________ Observer _________

Date of Observation _______

Observe the learning environment in your colleague’s classroom by rating its cultural responsiveness on two levels:

• **Quantitative:** Is the environmental feature in place? Yes or No

• **Qualitative:** aspects of responsiveness, including creativity, presentation, and student friendliness

Rate the quality of responsiveness on a five-point scale from very responsive (5) to least responsive (1).

Add comments or suggestions to discuss with the teacher whose classroom you have observed.

Print-Rich Environment

**Quantitative:** Is the 70:30 ratio of authentic to commercially produced print resources evident in the classroom? Yes or No (circle one)

**Qualitative:** Rate the level of responsiveness (creativity, presentation, and student friendliness)

Learning Centers

**Quantitative:** Are a variety of learning centers present? Is space set up for them to be organized? Yes or No (circle one)
**Qualitative**: Rate the level of responsiveness (creativity, presentation, and student friendliness)

**Culturally Colorful**

**Quantitative**: Does the room feature a variety of colors that are relevant to various cultures or to the culture/activities of the school? Yes or No (circle one)

**Qualitative**: Rate the level of responsiveness (creativity, presentation, and student friendliness)

**Optimally Arranged**

**Quantitative**: Does the room arrangement facilitate ease of movement, management, and presentations? Yes or No (circle one)

**Qualitative**: Rate the level of responsiveness (creativity, presentation, and student friendliness)

*What are the strengths in the learning environment?*

*What are the limitations in the learning environment?*

*What are your plans for using the survey findings?*
Appendix C

NLU Doctoral Research Informed Consent

My name is Sherri M. Simek Rodriguez, and I am a Doctor of Educational Leadership student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, How Can School Leaders Support Teachers in Becoming Culturally Proficient, occurring from 1/2019-10/2020. The purpose of this study is to investigate the level of cultural proficiency of teachers within a low-income, urban community. This study will help researchers develop a deeper understanding of how school leaders are able to identify levels of cultural proficiency of their staff and then determine what opportunities, resources, and supports leaders can provide teachers in fostering equitable and culturally responsive education. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Sherri M. Simek Rodriguez, student at National Louis University, Chicago.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to explore How Can School Leaders Support Teachers in Becoming Culturally Proficient and you may be asked to complete one or all of the following:

- An individual, anonymous interview session scheduled at your convenience (if choosing to participate) during the 2018-2020 school years. It will include ten questions that will analyze how cultural proficiency is supported within your school building
  - The interview will last up to 60 minutes and will include approximately ten questions.
  - Interviews will be recorded and you will be able to view and have final approval on the content and interview transcripts.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published but participants’ identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will secure recordings, transcripts, and field notes in a locked cabinet in her home office. Only the researcher will have access to data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than that encountered in daily life.
Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Sherri M. Simek Rodriguez at ssimekrodriguez@my.nl.edu to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, Sherri Rodriguez at ssimekrodriguez@my.nl.edu.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Shaunti Knauth or Dr. Carol Burg, the co-chairs of NLU’s Institutional Research Board. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study How Can School Leaders Support Teachers in Becoming Culturally Proficient. My participation will consist of the activities below:

● 60-minute interview conducted by Sherri M. Simek Rodriguez

________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s Signature                                                    Date

________________________________________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                                     Date
Appendix D

Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions:

Journey into Education, Motivation and Beliefs

1) Can you please tell me about your personal experience(s) that led you into the education field?
2) What motivated you to pursue teaching as a career?
3) What issues do you believe are most important in addressing student and teacher needs?

Cultural Proficiency

4) As you reflect on your experience working with students, how do you define the importance of cultural proficiency?
5) What experiences influenced your current beliefs and understanding of Cultural Proficiency?
6) Do you consider yourself to be a critically reflective thinker? Please explain why this is important as you seek to foster cultural proficiency?
7) How has that influenced your perspective as an educator?

Supporting Cultural Proficiency/Professional Development

8) What approaches and/or strategies do you implement in order to support your Black and Latino students?
9) What do you believe is necessary in your role as a teacher in order to support your Black and Latino students to be successful?
10) How can leaders support teachers working in school districts serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations?
11) What role does cultural proficiency play in improving social emotional learning (SEL) and teaching and learning?
12) What professional development can be helpful in this area?
Appendix E:

School Leader Interview Questions

School Leader Interview Questions:

Journey into Education, Motivation and Beliefs

1) Can you please tell me about your personal experience(s) that led you into the education field?
2) What motivated you to pursue school leadership?
3) What issues do you believe are most important in addressing student and teacher needs?

Cultural Proficiency

4) As you reflect on your experience working with students and teachers how do you define the importance of cultural proficiency?
5) What experiences influenced your current beliefs and understanding of Cultural Proficiency?
6) Do you consider yourself to be a critically reflective thinker? Please explain why this is important as you seek to foster cultural proficiency?
7) How has that influenced your perspective as an instructional leader?

Supporting Cultural Proficiency/Professional Development

8) What approaches and/or strategies do you implement in order to support a teacher’s ability to support their Black and Latino students?
9) What do you believe is necessary in your role as a principal in order to support your Black and Latino students to be successful?
10) How can leaders support teachers working in school districts serving predominantly African American and Latino student populations?
11) What role does cultural proficiency play in improving social emotional learning (SEL) and teaching and learning?
12) What professional development can be helpful in this area?
Appendix F

Significant Interview Findings

Table 4.1

Significant Interview Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Beliefs and/or Past Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Leader A:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You need to be able to show those students that you understand who they are, you respect who they are. You might not agree with who they are, but you understand their perspective and you can identify that their perspective might be different than yours.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think we need to see people for who they are when they walk through the door.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Even that phrase, ‘Treat others the way that you want to be treated,’ I think it should be, ‘Treat others the way they want to be treated.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Leader B:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I grew up in I think it was named, like, the most diverse neighborhood in Chicago. And then my school had, like, someone from each ethnicity in the world.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was just exposed every day to different cultures, different ethnicities, races. Like, just all around me every day, that was like my normal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher A:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I love kids. I’ve always loved kids and I’ve always enjoyed working with kids, so that brought me to teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher B:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was constantly a translator for my parents. I was constantly a writer for my parents. I was a teacher for my parents. I go to school, I learn, I teach them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My parents, my experiences with my parents is what led me into ESL. I’ve always had a love for ESL. I’ve always had a natural instinct and an understanding and compassion for ELL learners.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultural Awareness

School Leader A:
“Addressing the needs of the individual personalities and needs are more important than the academic needs, is what I’ve come to realize. That supporting the whole person first in what they’re struggling with in their personal life and what they’re struggling with their own insecurities.”
“I’ve come to realize that saying you can’t teach a student who’s not ready to learn or the same thing as an adult, has become more and more obvious in my life.”
“You’re going to be open to their experiences. You’re going to be ... You’re going to draw connections to their lives. You’re going to ask them to share their experiences. You’re going to understand and empathize or sympathize what they might be experiencing.”

School Leader B:
“But also be a little bit vulnerable, put yourself out there.”
“Be more open and more accepting of other people’s ways of doing things.”
“Knowing someone’s cultural background.”
“You have to do that by knowing who your students are and how much their culture is important to them. And if they see you trying, they’re going to appreciate that.”

Teacher A:
“Kids come with so much. We always say we don’t know what’s behind those little faces, all the home life things that we need to support outside of our circle of control.”
“Vulnerability and being open.”
“I think there’s a difference between teaching and teaching the kids that are in front of you. I think that is where we have to start. What do the kids that are in front of you need? What do we need to do to help them?”

Teacher B:
“Another struggle is a lot of times students coming in not having the prerequisites needed to do things teachers maybe don’t have the prerequisites needed.”
“Acting disrespectful, acting disruptive, acting like he doesn’t want to be here and he’s too loud and is making a scene and the way that I take that is, well, is this student, first of all, interested in activity? Is he bored? Is the teacher understanding who he is and where he comes from, meaning not where he comes from home, but where he comes from culturally.”
## Assumptions

**School Leader A:**

“I started to realize that some of my assumptions about people and my assumptions about culture or gender or race were inaccurate.”

“We had the same misconceptions about each other.”

“For some reason I had it in my head that Black families teach their children Black history.”

“I had this assumption, that Latino students and Black students would come to school with a different set of prerequisite skills or a different set of background knowledge that they don’t have. And I don’t know why I felt that way.”

**School Leader B:**

“I think you have to know the students that you’re working with, for sure. And part of knowing them is knowing about their culture. But you also have to know and be aware of, I think, just because somebody is of a certain culture or race or ethnicity, it doesn’t mean that because they’re this, they’re going to react this way. Or because they’re Hispanic, they’re going to react this way. Because they’re black, they’re going to react … no, not at all. You have to know that everybody is different and that’s okay to be different. But you have to know a little bit about their background and their culture so that you can, I believe, best serve them as well.”

**Teacher B:**

“I was born here and I was raised here in the States. Just because I looked a little different than your typical all American white child, all American child, doesn’t mean that I’m any different. I didn’t understand.”

## Modeling/Student Needs

**School Leader A:**

“Every student is going to need something different for them to be successful.”

“I think the biggest goal that a school leader can have, is to look beyond all the challenges that students come with and find their unique talents to help them be successful.”

**School Leader B:**

“But I really feel that when you tell a student, ‘I’ll be here or I’ll pick you up. Or I’m going to call home.’ That you follow through with what you say you’re going to do. And I think that that builds trust between you and the student.”

“I also think that reaching out to parents and whoever’s in the home, also is something that needs to be done. Because not only does that build the relationship with the parents and the family, but the student also sees that you are on the same page, or you’re at least trying to be
on the same page with their parents. Sometimes the students might not like it, but they know, I think, what to expect. And I think that students work best when they know what to expect. “Listening to their needs and figuring out what those needs are and how I can help.”

Teacher A:

“Meeting them where they are, but pushing them and finding that balance between what they need and how they’re coming to us, and what they’re lacking with what they come to us, and pushing them to do what they can do.

“I feel like they [students] ask a lot of questions out of curiosity, and they want to learn, and that’s where it starts with a book that they don’t know something about, and then you go from there with this conversation.”

Teacher B:

“Kids today they underestimate the power of their knowledge and they underestimate their abilities and they need to be... once they’re motivated then they excel.”

Modeling/Teacher Needs

School Leader A:

“I think modeling is one.”

“Give teachers examples of how. Like, when we say build relationships, what does that mean? So we’ve shown videos, we’ve shown examples of teachers at the door having an individualized handshake for each other, or high fives, hugs and handshakes. Or posting on the wall.

“Show staff members all the ways that can be done, lead them to those examples, and then hope they take them. And if they do, reinforce that, support that, recognize that we see them doing that. And if they’re not, then inserting ourselves into their classrooms, sitting in their morning meetings and helping connect the students.”

“Pulling students out for lunch and having conversations with them, and learning about Korean dance music, that I was so lucky to learn about this year. And then sharing those experiences with other staff so that they see it’s everybody. ‘We’re not just telling you to do it, that we’re doing it alongside you.’”

School Leader B:

“Teachers need more support or education on building relationships with students, the social aspect. They definitely need more support with that.”

Teacher A:
“Doing a bias test training, just acknowledging your biases as a teacher, and having people that you can go to and learn from and reflect through that.”

“I think learning from them and learning your kids and having that open conversation dialogue with your kids.”

“I think the training piece that we don’t always get, that sometimes there’s a different culture that teachers aren’t prepared for and don’t know how to even handle, and that conversation almost kind of like a mediation piece with teachers and sometimes students to learn this environment and this culture would probably help.”

Teacher B:

“Teachers, speaking for myself, need to be aware of what the needs are that each individual teacher needs and seek out that assistance that seek out resources.”

“It’s my job to seek out resources to help improve myself for in turn to help improve my students.”

“Principals and administrators help by supporting teachers’ needs. Teachers need to voice their needs.”

Relationships

School Leader A:

“It helped me to, I guess, draw closer and understand and get a better relationship with those people that I went with, because I was more willing to ask the questions. ‘Tell me about this. What does that mean? When this happened, why did that happen?’ And not everybody did that.”

“because people are not willing to listen or accept feedback or give you feedback if they don’t have that trusting or caring or productive relationships.”

“Give the time to listen and then store that away and build upon that conversation and that relationship.”

School Leader B:

“I mean I really am a big believer in building relationships.”

“I really think that teachers should try their best to connect.”

“You’re supposed to build relationships with the families as well.”

“By building relationships with the family is what I found the best way to do that.”

Teacher A:

“I feel like every student feeling safe and home is one of the first things.”
“In our PLCs, we worked so hard to get this trust together so we can hold each other accountable, and say things, and feel like, ‘I need your help with this, I don’t know,’ And facing those biases with each other, and having those conversations.

“Vulnerability and being open.”

“I have a really good team that checks in on each other and builds this friendship outside of this school, so it helps when you have people that you can count on and trust.”

“If kids don’t feel like you get them, it makes all these other feelings, anger, frustration, not wanting to be here, it ties hand in hand. When they feel like someone’s on their team or someone’s trying to understand them, they’re more willing to be open and work through things and just learn about other people. So if it’s you’re not willing to learn about them, they’re not willing to put the effort in. Kind of like it goes both ways.”

Teacher B:

“He gives me hugs like there’s no tomorrow before he goes home, and that is amazing because I feel like I tapped in and I made a connection. So when he is acting out I can bring him back and he’s not going to flip his lid and storm out of the room.”
Appendix G

Learning Strategy 1: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Learning Strategy 1: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Purpose: To identify aspects of the school or district culture that may be barriers to cultural Proficiency.

Time Needed: Sixty minutes

Materials: Response Sheet: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Briefing: Let’s see if we can identify some of the barriers to cultural proficiency in our school (or district).

Process:

1. Distribute Response Sheet: Barriers to Cultural Proficiency.
2. Review the meaning of the terms to be sure that people understand them.
3. Organize participants into groups of three to five.
4. Ask each group to brainstorm examples for each term. Invite each small group to share with the larger group.

Debriefing:

1. What did you think, feel, or wonder as you completed this exercise?
2. What surprises you?
3. What made this activity difficult or easy?
4. What conclusions can you draw from the answers of the group?
5. What would you like to do with this information?
Response Sheet:

In your small groups, list examples within your organization of these barriers to cultural proficiency.

Systemic Oppression:

- Distributing power and privilege (consciously or unintentionally) only to members of dominant groups.

- Abusing power accrued through rules and roles within the organization.

- The presumption of entitlement and unearned privilege.

- Not recognizing that members of certain groups receive more privileges because of their position or because of the groups to which they belong.

- Assuming that you accrued all of your personal achievements and societal or organizational benefits because of your competence or your character and do not need to share or redistribute what you have or help others to acquire what you have.

- Unawareness of the need to adapt.

- Not recognizing the need to make personal and organizational changes in response to the diversity of the people with whom you and your organization interact.

- Believing instead that only the others need to change and adapt to you

- Resistance to change

- Believing that the changes need to be made externally, by others, not within self.

- Not recognizing that the journey to cultural proficiency is a change process, not an event.

(Lindsey, Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2019, p. 245)
Appendix H

Learning Strategy 2: Describe a Culturally Incompetent Organization

Purpose: To use with resistant groups or with groups that find it hard to grasp the concepts of privilege and entitlement

Time Needed: Forty-five minutes

Materials: A copy of the cultural proficiency continuum

Briefing: Use your imagination to describe the worst kind of school you can think of. Almost all of the behaviors and activities will fall along the left side of the continuum—cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness. Some may be characterized as cultural precompetence. All of these are culturally intolerant or culturally incompetent behaviors.

Process

1. Refer to the continuum.
2. Divide the participants into groups of four to six.
3. Encourage them to have fun as they develop their descriptions.
   a. Include the following:
      i. Composition of the staff
      ii. Decision makers and their methods
      iii. How information is communicated to others
      iv. How resources are acquired
      v. To whom resources are allocated
      vi. Symbols of privilege and entitlement
4. Let each group share its descriptions with the larger group.

5. After the groups have shared, identify those items on the group lists that exemplify barriers to cultural proficiency. Categorize the items listed as a manifestation of privilege, power, or entitlement or a reflection of the unawareness of the need to adapt.

Debriefing:

1. What did you think, feel, or wonder as you completed this exercise?

2. What surprised you?

3. What made this activity difficult or easy?

4. What conclusions can you draw from the answers of the group?

5. Do you recognize any similarities between this imaginary organization and your organization?

6. How much of what you described is going on in your real-life organization?

7. What would you like to do with this information? Individually? As leaders? Select one thing that you would like to address.

(Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 248).
Appendix I

ISU Course Catalog ~ Course Catalog

2019-2020 Catalog I Teaching and Learning

MAJOR IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (B.S. in Ed.)

General Education (39 credit hours)
Refer to the General Education section of the Undergraduate Catalog for a complete list of General Education requirements and courses.

Communication and Composition (2 courses required)
___ 1 COM 110 Communication as Critical Inquiry
___ 3 ENG 101 or ENG 101A Composition as Critical Inquiry

Mathematics (1 course required)
___ 1 MAT 110 Dimensions of Numerical Reasoning

Natural Science/Natural Science Alternatives (2 courses required)
Students must complete a course from 2 different sciences:
___ 3 BSC 101 or BSC 102 or PHY 101

United States Traditions (1 course required)
___ 3 HIS 135 or HIS 136

Individuals & Civic Life (1 course required)
___ 3 POL 101 or POL 106

Five Arts (1 course/6 credit hours required)**

Humanities (1 course required)**
___ 3 ENG 170 Foundations in Literature for Children

Qualitative Reasoning (1 course required)
Exempt for Elementary Education majors
___ 3 GEO 111 Earth's Dynamic Weather

Science, Math, & Technology (1 course required)**
___ 3 GEO 195 World Geography

Additional Graduation Requirements
___ 120 minimum total credit hours
___ 42 minimum senior college hours

AMALY requirement
***Certain courses in General Education fulfill the AMALY requirement. See the AMALY Requirement section of the catalog or the Course Finder website for a list of courses.
___ 3 GEO 135 World Geography

F Admission to Professional Studies required
If you must meet the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) requirement

Major (110 credit hours)

1 TCH 201 Elementary Education: Practices & Issues (P; TCH 210; conc. reg. in TCH 210 and 208)
1 TCH 202 Elementary Education Clinical (P; TCH 210; conc. reg. in TCH 204 and 208)
1 TCH 208 Literacy I: Reading & Language Arts in Elementary Schools (P; TCH 210; conc. reg. in TCH 204 and 208)
1 TCH 209 Literacy II: Reading & Language Arts in Elementary Schools (P; TCH 204 taken within 7 years)
1 TCH 247 Science Inquiry in Elementary Schools (P; TCH 210)
1 TCH 257 Science Methods I (P; TCH 247 Conc. reg. in TCH 258, 260, and 264)
1 TCH 258 Social Studies Methods I (P; TCH 208 and 260 taken within 7 years; conc. reg. in TCH 257, 260, and 264, 50+ earned hours)
1 TCH 300 Elementary Education Clinical II (P; conc. reg. in TCH 317, 218, 264)
1 TCH 364 Language Arts Instructional Strategies (P; TCH 308 and 309 or 335 or 267, 50+ earned hours)
1 TCH 391 Teaching for Equity in Elementary Classrooms: Assessment, Collaboration, & Communication (P; conc. reg. in TCH 390, 391)
1 COM 110 Communication as Critical Inquiry
1 ENG 100 or ENG 105A Compositions as Critical Inquiry
1 ENG 170 Foundations in Literature for Children

3 GEO 135 World Geography
3 GEO 211 Earth's Dynamic Weather
2 KIN 221 Physical Education for Elementary Classroom Teacher (P; 30+ earned hours)
3 MAT 110 Dimensions of Numerical Reasoning (P; CR for MAT 102A01 or 104 or placement)
3 MAT 119 College Algebra or (by placement) (P; CR for MAT 102A01 or 104 or placement)
3 MAT 152 Dimensions of Mathematical Reasoning (P; C or better in MAT 110)
3 MAT 161 Teaching Mathematics in the Elementary School (P; C or better in MAT 110 and 112 or 204; 60+ earned hours; 2.5 cumulative GPA)
3 SED 102 Exceptional Learners
3 SIT 390A01 Student Teaching in Elementary Education

Take 1 of the following courses:
___ 3 BSC 195 Concepts in Biology
___ 3 BSC 195A01 Fund Concepts in Biology: For Future Elem Teachers

Take 1 of the following courses (P; 45+ earned hours):
___ 3 EAP 250 Social Foundations
___ 3 EAP 251 Introduction to Philosophy of Education
___ 3 EAP 253 Educational Foundations

Take 1 of the following courses:
___ 3 CHE 102 Chemistry & Society
___ 3 PHY 102 Atoms to Galaxies

Take 1 of the following courses:
___ 3 HIS 135 History of the United States to 1865
___ 3 HIS 136 History of the United States Since 1865

Take 1 of the following courses:
___ 3 POL 101 Civics & Governance
___ 3 POL 106 U.S. Government & Civic Practices

Take 1 of the following courses:
___ 3 ECO 120 Principles of Microeconomics
___ 3 ECO 130 Principles Of Macroeconomics
___ 3 ECO 133 Individual & Social Choice (P; COM 110 or ENG 101 or conc. reg.)
___ 3 ECO 209 Principles of Economics

Take 1 of the following courses:
___ 3 ART 204 Arts for Elementary Schools: Visual Arts (P; 45+ earned hours; 2.5 GPA)
___ 3 DAN 281 Arts for Elementary School: Dance
___ 3 MUS 277 Arts for Elementary School: Music
___ 3 THE 281 Arts for Elementary School: Theatre

Take 1 of the following courses (P; 45+ hours earned):
___ 3 TCH 210 Child Growth & Development (P; 45+ hours earned)
___ 3 TCH 210A Child Growth & Development: ECE (P; ECE majors only; 30+ hours earned)

Take 1 of the following courses, depending on which track is chosen (see below):
___ 3 TCH 246 Foundations for Effective Practice with English Learners (P; TCH 210 or conc. reg.)
___ 3 TCH 286 Effective Strategies for Teaching English Learners in the General Education Classroom (P; 30+ earned hours)

Choose one of the following tracks. Please consult with your academic advisor.

English as a Second Language Elective Track (9 hours):
___ 3 TCH 205 and 248 as indicated as required above, plus the following:
___ 3 TCH 147 Cross Cultural Teaching and Learning (P; 30+ hours earned)
___ 3 TCH 220 Assessment of Bilingual Learners and Bilingual Program Design (P; Teacher Ed program and TCH 248 or 249)
___ 3 TCH 121 Methods and Materials for Bilingual and English Language Learners (P; Teacher Ed program, TCH 248 or 319 or concurrent registration)

Reading Teacher Elective Track (9 hours):
___ 3 TCH 220 Reading Assessment (P; TCH 205 or 248 or 249 taken within seven years; or Education or Psychology measurement recommended)
___ 3 TCH 255 Content Area Language and Literacy in Elementary Classrooms (P; 45+ hrs; TCH 208 or conc. reg.)
___ 3 TCH 224 Developing Readers Through Writing (P; 45+ hrs completed)

Special Education Elective Track (9 hours):
___ 3 SED 220 and TCH 210 as indicated as required above, plus the following:
___ 3 SED 194/104A Workshop Special Ed Introduction to Ahd Related Disorders
___ 3 SED 203 Family, Professional, and Community Collaboration (P; SED 102)
___ 3 SED 169 Technology for Young Children With Disabilities (P; SED 101 or equivalent or consent of the dept chair)

Elementary Education Elective Track (9 hours):
___ 3 TCH 248 as indicated as required above, plus the following:
___ 3 SED 203 Family, Professional, and Community Collaboration (P; SED 102)
___ 3 TCH 243 Language And Learning In A World Language (P; must be accepted into a Teacher Ed program or have consent of the instructor)
___ 3 TCH 282 Urban Education: An Introduction

Please see graduation requirements for all Teacher Education Majors in regard to State of Illinois requirements including edfi PA.

Teaching and Learning Courses:
https://coursefinder.illinois.edu/department/fah/
All Courses: https://coursefinder.illinois.edu/department/
Appendix J

Diversity in Children’s Books 2018

Infographic on diversity in children’s books by Sarah Park Dahlen & David Huyck.
APPENDIX K

As-Is and To-Be Diagnostic Tools

Figure 1. As-Is Diagnostic Tool

"As-Is" 4 Cs Analysis for Central School District (CSD)

- **Context**
  1. Little to no understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy
  2. Little to no understanding of restorative practices; i.e., punitive vs. restorative consequences
  3. Lack of buy-in from the district
  4. Lack of consciousness among stakeholders
  5. Teachers struggle to close the achievement gap

- **Culture**
  1. No sense of urgency to learn about culturally responsive pedagogies
  2. Relationships have not been repaired and/or restored among all parties
  3. Limited district guidance on student discipline
  4. Inconsistent parent support with student discipline issues
  5. Inconsistent values and beliefs among stakeholders around student discipline

- **Teachers with a high understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy developed it from their core values, background and/or past experiences.**

- **Competencies**
  1. Lack of culturally responsive student discipline strategies
  2. Culturally proficient teachers not holding non-culturally proficient teachers accountable
  3. Teachers are unsure of what consequences they can give
  4. Teachers lack SEL strategies
  5. Teachers lack strategies to academically support minority students

- **Conditions**
  1. Teacher demographic consists of 81% white teachers; student demographics are 51% African American and 49% Hispanic
  2. Consequences for physical altercations are under the discretion of the principal and/or assistant principal, and teachers have disagreed with the consequences given
  3. No professional development on culturally responsive pedagogy
  4. Little to no professional development on restorative practices; i.e., punitive vs. restorative consequences
  5. Negative student behaviors affect instruction
Figure 5: To-Be Diagnostic Tool

“To-Be” 4 Cs Analysis for Central School District (CSD)

Context
1. Teachers have a deep understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy
2. Teachers have a deep understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy
3. District supports and models ongoing implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy
4. Clear lines of communication among stakeholders

Teachers have a deep understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy that positively impacts student achievement and social emotional learning.

Culture
1. The district fully supports and systemically implements culturally responsive pedagogies
2. Teachers place a strong value on building and maintaining strong relationships
3. District works with stakeholders to create guidance that has clear and consistent expectations on culturally responsive practices and student discipline
4. Parents/guardians collaborate with the school staff to support culturally responsive practices
5. Shared values and beliefs among stakeholders around culturally responsive practices

Conditions
1. District will purposefully seek to increase the racial diversity of teaching staff
2. Consequences for disciplinary actions are restoratively and collaboratively handled between administration, teachers, and other relevant parties to repair harm and restore relationships
3. Ongoing professional development and coaching on culturally responsive pedagogy
4. Ongoing professional development and coaching on restorative practices
5. Little to no negative student behaviors and when they occur, they do not affect or impede instruction

Competencies
1. Implementation of culturally responsive student discipline strategies
2. Culturally proficient teachers take lead and mentor non-culturally proficient teachers
3. Teachers work in collaboration with school/district team to create a framework for culturally responsive classroom management
4. Teachers have training and support on SEL strategies
5. Teachers have training and support on strategies to academically support minority students